



The
DAUGHTER
of a SOLDIER
L. T. MEADE



She was listening intently to the song of the lark.—Page 2.

THE DAUGHTER OF A SOLDIER

A Colleen of South Ireland

BY

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AUTHOR OF "OCEANA'S GIRLHOOD," "A WILD IRISH GIRL," "THE GIRLS OF MERTON COLLEGE," "FOR DEAR DAD," "KITTY O'DONOVAN," "PEGGY FROM KERRY," "THE CHESTERTON GIRL GRADUATES," "THE GIRLS OF KING'S ROYAL," "THE LADY OF JERRY BOY'S DREAMS,"
"A PLUCKY GIRL," "THE QUEEN OF JOY," "A
GIRL OF HIGH ADVENTURE," "JILL,
THE IRRESISTIBLE," ETC.

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WITH FOUR HALF-TONE ILLUSTRATIONS
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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. PERIWINKLES	1
II. EAVESDROPPING	14
III. KINGSALA BY THE SEA.....	33
IV. THE O'SHEE	48
V. THE MAJOR AND HIS CHILD.....	59
VI. COLONEL HERBERT TO THE RESCUE.....	70
VII. HAPPINESS	83
VIII. SUMMER WITH AN EAST WIND.....	95
IX. STEP-DAUGHTERS	109
X. AT TEMPLEMORE	117
XI. THE GRAND BLÜTHNER.....	122
XII. POPSY-DAD	134
XIII. FLY-AWAY	156
XIV. FELICITY	171
XV. MISS PINCHIN	183
XVI. THE POWER OF HATRED.....	192
XVII. THE HOME OF SILENCE.....	200
XVIII. THE PEAK OF DESOLATION WHERE GOD WAS...	206
XIX. THE LOVE THAT PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.....	221
XX. A FAILURE	236
XXI. THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE SCHOOL.....	249
XXII. THE WHITE ANGEL	262
XXIII. THE WOUNDED HAND AND ARM.....	278
XXIV. WHITE FLOWERS AND FORGIVENESS FOREVERMORE	289
XXV. FUZZY-WUZZY	303
XXVI. THE LESSON NOT YET LEARNED.....	314
XXVII. THE LEARNING OF LIFE'S LESSON.....	319

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
She was listening intently to the song of the lark	<i>Frontispiece</i>
She could ride by a sort of instinct. She was part of her horse	85
She stretched out her arms wider and sang in her glorious voice	204
"Stoop close to me. . . . You are Maureen and I love you"	288

THE DAUGHTER OF A SOLDIER.

CHAPTER I.

PERIWINKLES.

It was a glorious midsummer day in the south of Ireland; it seemed as though the birds wanted to sing their little hearts out. The trees were in full leaf, and every flower bloomed with extra charm and extra perfume. The old Rectory, situated in the well-known county of Cork, was in a very lonely part. On one side it was five miles away from the charming little town of Kingsala, and on the other quite ten miles from the thriving and more mercantile town of Bradley. The Rectory stood by itself, its thirty acres of grounds surrounding it. It had a back avenue and a winding front avenue, but its special charm was its great fruit garden. This was generally kept locked, for the Rector was most particular with regard to his fruit. It had in addition a great lawn, studded over with flower-beds filled mostly with roses. Just below this lawn was an apiary full of bees. Then there were fields, cultivated sometimes with grass for hay, sometimes with potatoes, sometimes again with other vegetables;

but beyond the lawn and the fields were great pasture lands full of sheep, which formed a constant source of income to the Rector, who was not too well off. His income from his living was exactly one pound a day, but his wife, a haughty dame, with fiery blue eyes and red hair, had large private means; therefore Templemore was always kept in a certain kind of order. There were the necessary number of gardeners; the old-fashioned and queer-looking house had a great many servants, who did their work in the Irish fashion, which was slovenly and untidy enough; but nevertheless, they always managed to have a good dinner for "Herself," as they called Mrs. O'Brien, being very much afraid, "so to spake, of the wummen's tongue." That tongue could scathe them, and they did not want to be scathed.

On this summer day, when the story opens, Maureen lay flat on her back and looked up, up, up, through the tall trees to the blue sky, which peeped down through the branches at her. She was lying on a nest of periwinkles, some white, some blue. There was clover within reach also, and butterflies were flying here, there, and everywhere. Maureen picked one or two periwinkles and watched the butterflies as they flew from flower to flower. But she was not really interested either in the butterflies or the flowers. She was listening intently to the song of the lark, piercing, high, and clear, as he soared up from his bed of earth to his heavenly home, until he looked a mere speck in the ethereal distance.

Close to her were the missel-thrush and the blackbird, and the chirping, independent little Robin Red-breast, and a few swallows darting here and there. Yes, they were all about her, they were all around her, and they made this summer day the perfection of bliss.

An Irish terrier, by name Larry, with his rough coat of golden, tawny yellow, lay by her side. Now and then Maureen fondled him with her useful little hand—that hand which was so seldom idle, and was only idle now because she was a trifle anxious—only a trifle, but still, she did not feel *quite* herself, for undoubtedly things were happening and she did not know what they were. She wanted to know, but could not find out. She dreaded to ask, but she dreaded the reply still more.

Maureen was not exactly pretty, but she had what is called a lovable face, and her uncle, the Reverend Patrick O'Brien, loved her quite as much as he did his only daughter Kitty, aged six years, and his brave young son Dominic, a boy who, according to the well-known Irish saying, could lure the birds out of the bushes by the love-light that always seemed to shine out of his honest, deep-blue eyes—those truly Irish eyes with their thick jet-black upward-curved lashes.

Then there was Denis, a dear little fellow, some years younger than Dominic, but on the other hand some years older than Kitty, with her sweet ways and angelic dimples and masses of bright golden hair.

Maureen was the only child of Major O'Brien, twin-brother of the Reverend Patrick O'Brien. The gallant and noble Major had died of a wound inflicted in battle. He died in rescuing a brother soldier, but lived long enough to obtain the Victoria Cross and to put his only child, a little girl of six years of age, into his brother's care.

Thus Maureen came to Templemore, and while her Aunt—Patrick O'Brien's first wife—lived, she was a truly happy child. It was her nature to be happy; but when she reached her eighth birthday the sweet woman who alone ever stood in the place of a mother to the child passed on to a happier home, and the Rector, who was so terribly broken down that he did not recover quickly, was ordered abroad.

A woman, sharp and knowing, fell in love with the really fascinating widower. She was determined to win him, and win him she did. He did not even pretend to love her; but she so worked on his feelings that when at the end of a year he returned to Templemore Mrs. O'Brien Number Two accompanied him. All too quickly he found her out—all too soon were his life and the lives of his children and that other child—in many ways the dearest of all—rendered miserable.

The second Mrs. O'Brien was a widow of the name of Mostyn when the Rector married her. She was a rich woman, but in certain ways she was stingy. She placed her two daughters at a very cheap school near Dublin, and never allowed them to come home

for the holidays. At last, however, she knew that they would soon be old enough to return.

Being obliged to consult her husband on the subject, she spoke cheerfully about the life her handsome young daughters would bring into the old place. Some day, she declared, they would be rolling in wealth, and they should have every advantage that money even now could bestow upon them. A rough-looking youth called Larry should be their groom; they should have a smart little pony-carriage of their own, and could go into Kingsala as often as the fancy pleased them. Kingsala was a garrison town, and the poor beautiful weans should have every chance of marrying well and of enjoying themselves.

The Rector gave a heavy sigh.

"Yes, that will be excellent work," pursued Mrs. O'Brien. "I shall have one of the best rooms in the house refurnished for my girls, and get them a Parisian maid and give them every chance. We shall have company here then, and Maureen can help in the house. She is a very plain child, and, eating the bread of charity as she does, she must make herself useful in some way. Kitty will by-and-by follow in her steps; but my children will have a very different future. You seem sometimes to forget that fact, Patrick."

But, alas, the Reverend Patrick O'Brien had never forgotten and never could forget the terrible fact which had brought misery into his hitherto happy home. He said nothing to his wife on this

special occasion—it was not his way to answer back; but a couple of days afterwards, he ordered what was called the old phaeton and drove to the nearest railway station, which went by the name of Farringallaway. He took a ticket from there to the city of Cork. He had a little business to do in the city, and in especial he had a very long talk with a certain doctor—Dr. James Mulhalphy. The two had a long and anxious conversation together, and the Rector returned home in the cool of the evening with a strange weight at his heart. That heart of his was very big and very loving, and the feeling he had was both of rejoicing and fear, for although long ago he had insured his life and settled his own little property on his children, Denis, Dominic, and Kitty, in those days there was no Maureen in the house, and he had done nothing at all for her. She was the only child of his twin-brother, who had died leaving her in his care, but who was unable to give her even a penny. Oh, how much the Rector loved that brother and how he adored the bonnie bit thing! But what was to happen now to that bright darling, who kept them all alive, who was never dull, never idle, never sulky; who never thought of herself for a single moment?

On this special, most lovely day, Maureen happened to be a little tired as well as anxious. She had been rushing about since early morning, attending to Aunt Constance, helping the inferior servants, and doing what she could for old Pegeen. She

felt that she had earned her rest under the trees. She had a very old and tattered book beside her. It had been given to her by her uncle, and was called *Gulliver's Travels*; it seemed to Maureen to be a most fascinating book, and when she told her uncle how she delighted in it, he informed her that on the occasion of her next birthday he would give her the *Arabian Nights* as a present. That birthday was four months off, it was true, but what mattered that when she had this priceless treasure to look forward to.

The summer at Templemore was ordinarily celebrated by a rich supply of fruit and vegetables, milk, butter, and eggs. The Reverend Patrick was a born gardener, and his strawberries were so fine that they scented the air as you passed them. In addition to the strawberries there were great gooseberries of every variety, raspberries as large as thimbles, also a fruit, not very well known now, called sugar-pears, other pears of every description, plums of every variety, apples innumerable, and peaches—oh, such peaches! In short, the summer of the year brought with it plenty and abundance. It resembled Joseph's fat kine, which were closely followed by the lean kine in the long sad winter.

Well, this was the longest day of the year. Maureen on her next birthday would be fourteen years of age. She had earned her rest under the tall trees, for had she not picked the peas and shelled them, and had she not gathered the strawberries and

removed their stalks? And had she not beaten up a great bowl of whipped cream to go with the said strawberries?

By-and-by Dominic came whistling along. He was accompanied by Denis, who had hoisted Kitty on his shoulder. Kitty was the baby of the family. She was a blue-eyed, fair-haired little girl, decidedly pretty and with a look at times—a look which came and went—of the Reverend Patrick O'Brien on her sweet, funny, jolly sort of face.

“Hullo,” suddenly cried Dominic. He stood still and stared at Maureen. “Puss, whatever are you idling for?”

“I’m not idling—I’m resting.”

“Resting? Whatever have you to be tired about?”

It seemed to Maureen at that moment that the sun went behind a cloud and that the fear at her heart grew greater and more tremendous. It was a large fear, and it pressed on her like a stone. She did not want to lie still any longer.

“I was resting,” she repeated, “and you’ll all know why when dinner-time comes along.”

“I hope Pegeen will cook the dinner properly,” said Denis. “There is such a jolly row when she doesn’t, and I do so hate old Step when she’s giving vent to her feelings.”

“Dominic,” suddenly exclaimed Maureen, “may I speak to you alone for a few minutes?”

“To be sure you may, girleen. I must say you

look jolly comfortable, and it is such a fag racing after Denis and Kitty—that is my present employment.”

“Him is big dog,” said Kitty; “Dommy makes a splendid big dog.”

“Well, I’m going to be Maureen’s big dog,” said Dominic, “if she wants me. You two go off and amuse yourselves. I’ll stretch on the periwinkles here close to Maureen.”

Now it so happened that everyone in the house, more or less, obeyed Dominic O’Brien, and before many minutes had passed he and Maureen were seated side by side and were both looking up at the blue sky through the mantle of green leaves which the trees threw across it. Both were also listening to the songs of the happy birds. They were silent for a short time, then Maureen whipped a dirty, very coarse little handkerchief out of her pocket and wiped away some tears. She was not the sort of child that ever cried. She had gone through a good deal of hardship since her uncle’s second marriage, but she had never complained, and to all appearance seemed to enjoy being scolded, for Mrs. O’Brien did scold her from morning till night, and when she was alone with her invariably called her “Charity child, ha! ha!”

Dominic gazed in amazement now at her tears.

“Maureen, mavourneen, what is the matter?”

“It is only that I am *frightened*,” whispered Maureen.

"Frightened—you? Whatever in the world about? I didn't think there was a bogie or ghost at the back o' beyond could frighten *you!*"

"It isn't that," whispered Maureen. "Those kind of things—why, they are nonsense. But it's about—about—oh, Dominic, hold my hand—it's about Uncle Pat. Haven't you noticed, Dom, dear?"

Dominic, who had filled his mouth with clover, spat it out, looked full at his cousin, and said, "I don't know what in the wide world you mean, Maureen."

"I have felt it in my sleep," she said, "and I have seen it in his dear eyes, and that day he went to Cork, don't you remember, Dom? How white and sad he was when he came home, and—bend close, please—to-day Dr. Haggarty called. Step-auntie followed him into the porch—she did not know that I was arranging sweet peas in the drawing-room, and the drawing-room door was wide open—and I heard her say quite distinctly, 'Bless us and save us, it won't be soon surely?' And he said—oh, Dominic, hold my hand *very* tight—'Madam, it may not be for years, but, on the other hand, it may be to-day or to-morrow.' 'That's a nice look-out for me,' said Step-auntie, and then she gave a sniff, not at all a sorry sniff, but an angry sniff, and she went back into the house. She even came into the drawing-room, and she saw me, but she took no more notice of me than if I was dirt. I was glad of that,

at least. Dominic, did you never guess—did you never suspect—that your own most precious father has not been of late what he used to be?”

“Can’t say I noticed,” said Dominic; “and if whatever is the matter with him is years away, why should we fret, Maureen?”

“Oh, oh,” Maureen began to sob.

Dominic was a most affectionate boy. He swept his strong arms now round his little cousin’s neck and kissed her many times.

“You think too much—you feel too much,” he said. “Remember that half their time doctors are wrong. That which old Haggarty says may never happen.”

Maureen’s soft, velvety eyes looked him full in the face.

“Don’t you know what he meant?” she asked.

“Can’t say I do; but for my part I don’t believe in people who say that something—I suppose it is something ghastly—may happen years ahead.”

“*Or to-day or to-morrow,*” repeated Maureen. “Dominic, hold my hand very, very tight. You’re older than me a good bit, but I think my heart is older than yours. I must explain to you. Whenever that comes which the doctor means——”

“Yes,” said the boy, turning a little pale.

“It means,” continued Maureen, “death! No more Uncle Patrick walking up and down the stairs, no more Uncle Patrick preaching his beautiful sermons to us in the church, no more Uncle Patrick

taking care of the garden and the fruit and the vegetables. He'll have gone up like the lark did a short time ago; he'll leave his little earthly nest and go up, up, up!"

Dominic felt a great choking lump in his throat.

"I say," he exclaimed suddenly, "the Pater does preach a lot lately about what he calls the City of Gold, and old 'Step'—she doesn't like it. I heard her say to him a couple of Sundays back, 'Patrick, you are frightfully morbid,' and he said, 'Do you call that morbid?' I did not dare to ask 'Step,' for she got so red and stamped her foot and said, 'Really and truly, all my plans will be upset.' I say, Maureen, can't you go and ask the Pater?"

"Oh, you are right enough," said Maureen; "whatever happens, you are his own children; and his wife will look after her daughters. But oh, Dominic, what's to become of me? There is only the world and it's *cold*; and I know very little, for I haven't been taught much. There's only the cold world for Maureen."

"There's nothing of the sort," cried Dominic. "I swear that I'll share my very last crust with you, Maureen."

"Oh, but aren't you a darling," said the child.

She suddenly gave him some sloppy wet kisses on his freckled face, then she said, "You make me feel brave. When shall I go and see Uncle Pat. We may be frightening ourselves about nothing after all."

“Of course we may,” said Dominic, who was a very cheerful sort of lad. “I’ve got a grand plan. The ‘Step’ has driven to Kingsala to see a lot of friends, and she put on her very, very best clothes, and a great aigrette in her hat, which I thought wasn’t right for her to wear, and she was in blue with heaps of flowers fastened on her dress. I’ll bring father right out here. It’s a perfect day, and I’ll get his great thick rug and some cushions, and he shall lie close to you, little mate, and you can ask him anything in the wide world that you like. I don’t believe that story myself, not a bit, not a bit, but remember and never forget that, if the worst comes, we, you and I, share our last crust together.”

Maureen made no answer for she could not. Dominic, feeling very stiff and tall and determined, went as far as the study door. The Reverend Patrick lived in his study; it was his room of rooms. The lad was just about to go in when he heard voices, which surprised him and made his stout young heart stand still. One voice was his father’s, the other his step-mother’s.

CHAPTER II.

EAVESDROPPING.

DOMINIC had never in his short life of fifteen years been known to do an underhand or mean thing. It is true he had plenty of faults—for what lad has not—but his virtues outshone strong passions, and nobody in reality guessed that he possessed a wild, fearless, and adventurous nature.

At the present moment he stood listening as though stunned. He knew quite well that he was eavesdropping. The study door was a little open, and he could hear as distinctly as though he were in the room. He did not mind eavesdropping on this occasion. In fact, he meant to eavesdrop. What did it matter to him just then what the world thought of him. *They* were talking—his father—his most beloved father—and his equally detestable step-mother; and Dominic fully resolved with all his boyish heart to listen to each word they said, for he had caught the word “Maureen,” and he had further noticed the anguish in his father’s voice.

“Constance, you can’t do it—you cannot be so cruel!”

“I was half-way to Kingsala,” was the reply,

“when it suddenly flashed over me, Patrick, that you had better know my intentions, so I returned on purpose. I’m going straight to see Mr. Murphy, the solicitor, and after telling you first, I shall have a round talk with him. My talk will be with regard to Maureen.”

“Yes,” replied the Rector.

There was a pause, but the young eavesdropper had very sharp ears.

“You told me yourself, you silly man, that you are dying. It is true, that having taken the best medical advice, you may possibly hold on for a year or two, but you confess that your days are numbered. Now a year here or there does not much matter to me. I shall be a widow before long. Now I have my own girls to provide for—my Daisy and my Henrietta. I can do well for them, and your insurance money and your private means are settled on Kitty and the two boys by marriage settlement. There is nothing, therefore, for Maureen. When you adopted her, Patrick, you should have provided for her. I tell you, frankly and plainly, that after your death I will do nothing for the child. Maureen will be a beggar. She has never been properly educated, and I see nothing for her but to go into service. If she were a little taller she might make a parlour-maid. It is a pity she is so short and so plain. Well, I am outspoken. I tell you the exact truth. Maureen will not get one shilling from me, and your

children's money cannot be touched; so now you know."

"Constance, you can speak like that to a dying man. May God forgive your cold heart. Once, Constance, I thought you both beautiful and good; I was even fool enough to think there was something of the angel about you. Alas, I quickly learnt my mistake. Now, Constance, I will tell you plainly that my children and Maureen share and share alike."

"Ah," said Mrs. O'Brien, with a sort of groan, "how very stupid and silly you are, Patrick; but when you talk with Mr. Murphy he will tell you a very different story."

"Listen to me, Constance," continued the Rector, "I know well that I have not long to live, but I may hold out for a few years. My boys, my girl, and I will provide for Maureen. I never told you how she came into the family."

"You did not; but I cannot wait to hear your romantic story now. I may miss Mr. Murphy."

"Constance, you must wait. It will not take up five minutes of your time. My little brown-eyed Maureen came to me in this fashion. I had a twin-brother. I loved him better than myself. The thought of meeting him again is one of the joys I look forward to; he died of wounds received in the field of battle. His young wife had died before him, and he left his little child, Maureen, to me. I brought her up as my own. The boys look upon her

as their sister. Kitty does the same. Little Maureen came to the Rectory, and since then her sweetness and innocence have helped me to bear the greatest sorrow of my life—the loss of that brother who was dearer to me than myself. Now you can go, Constance, but Maureen shall be provided for.”

“You are about the most silly, out-of-the-world person I ever came across,” said Mrs. O’Brien. “Well, let me tell you that your story about yourself and your twin-brother does not affect me in the least. When you die, Maureen has to earn her living—or go to the workhouse. Well, you know the truth. As to upsetting your marriage settlement, it cannot be done. Ta-ta. I may not be back until very late. I was always outspoken, and shall be to my dying day.”

The overdressed woman turned swiftly and left the room.

Softly, very softly, Dominic hid himself behind a shabby old screen in the narrow passage which led to the Rector’s study. Mrs. O’Brien was soon returning to Kingsala, and Mr. O’Brien, feeling himself alone, weak and suffering, laid his head on his hands and groaned aloud.

“My little Maureen!” he murmured. “God, my Heavenly Father, help me. Can it be possible that what the woman says is true—that terrible woman, whom once I loved and—and married? Oh, my God, to have to face Maurice, my dearest brother, and tell him about little Maureen.”

Just then a light touch rested on the stricken man's shoulder. He raised his face and saw with astonishment his young son Dominic beside him.

"Dad," said Dominic, "Maureen and I were talking together about you. You can't imagine, dad, how lovely the air is outside. We were a bit anxious about you—Maureen and I—and (as 'herself' was away) we thought—Maureen and I did—that you might come out and lie on the thick rug with a pile of pillows under your head. You know the spot I mean. It is where the periwinkles grow and the tall trees shelter us from the hottest rays of the sun. Well, it was a little plan we made between us, Maureen and I; but when I came to fetch you—I'm not ashamed to own it, dearest old dad,—but the door was a bit open, and I heard voices and I listened. 'Herself' had come back and I heard her say that she would do nothing at all for Maureen; then I heard you say, you blessed man, that you would, when the time came, divide all your own money between Kitty and Maureen and Denis and myself. You will do it, won't you, dear dad?"

"Yes, my son, if it is possible."

"But how can it not be possible when we *all* wish it?" asked the boy.

"Listen, Dominic. Perhaps you had no right to overhear, but on the other hand perhaps God meant it. Anyhow you are on my side now."

"Dad, tell me the very truth. You are not really ill?"

"Yes, my son, really."

"But I mean"—the boy's voice choked—"badly?"

"Yes, lad, very badly."

"Still, you may live for years."

"That's true. Now, avick, listen to me. Your step-mother will return from visiting Murphy to-night. I greatly fear she will do what mischief she can. I have a great dread over me, Dom; I can't quite explain it; but to-morrow you and I will go together and see the solicitor. Oh yes, I am quite well enough for that. I'll get the truth out of him, cost me what it may. I won't listen to a word of what *she* has got to say. We'll go early in the warm part of the day and find out for ourselves what can be done for Maureen."

"Dad, there never was your like before. We'll go, and we'll put things as right as possible; and now, would it at all comfort you to come out and lie on the periwinkles where Maureen is waiting, for she has heard a few words, nothing of any consequence, but they have troubled her, and her dear, brave little heart is almost breaking. She loves you so passionately."

"Yes, we'll go," said the Rector.

He rose very slowly, and, leaning on his son's arm, presently approached the spot where Maureen, wondering at the long delay, was sitting up and waiting. She had her hands clasped round her knees, and the tears which filled her eyes a short time ago had ceased

to flow, for Maureen was not what she called a "cry-baby"; but the soft brown eyes were all the same full of wild fear. When she saw her uncle and cousin, however, she gave a glad exclamation, sprang to her feet, and ran forward to meet Uncle Pat.

"Oh, but this is heavenly," cried the child; "oh, but you have come to me your own self, you blessed darling." Then she and Dominic between them arranged the thick rug and the soft but shabby pillows, and the Rector lay down while Dominic with a bright nod to his little mate ran quickly away.

He crept into a disused old barn at the back of the house, and there he cried as few boys of his age do cry, silently, with a passion of sorrow, with an anguish of grief. He made no noise as the tears slowly rolled down over his cheeks, but the pain at his manly young heart was almost unbearable. Maureen! to treat her as the 'Step' would certainly treat her, and his most beloved father sooner or later to *die*. This was the first real touch of trouble that had come to the boy, and he felt that he could scarcely endure it.

"But whatever happens, father and I will settle about Maureen," he said to his troubled heart. "Darling Maureen!"

Meanwhile Maureen herself was in her element. She might cry afterwards, but she was certainly not going to cry now. She was a very young little girl, but she had in many ways far more self-control than

her older cousin, and her only object now was to comfort and cheer Uncle Pat.

"You mustn't sit out long, you know, Uncle Pat," she began, "but I'm sure we can have half an hour. Suppose we talk of the very pleasantest things. You begin, Uncle Pat. Tell me some of the very beautiful things you preach about when you talk to us about the City of Gold; and may I lay my head, very lightly—just there—on your *dear* shoulder. I won't tire you; I really won't. Are the gates really of pearl in your City and the streets of gold?"

"The Bible says so, my little girl."

"And the souls go up and up," continued Maureen, "and enter in and go out no more. And the Lord Jesus Christ has made mansions for them to live in, and there is the River of Life and the Tree of Life which is for the healing of the nations; and my Father is there. It must be very, very nice to be there; don't you think so, Uncle Pat?"

"Yes, Maureen."

"But we are down here, at present," said Maureen, "so we must do with this little bit of the earth, and I'm just awfully happy when I'm with you and Dom. Now I want to tell you all the funny stories I can think of. I want to make you laugh. Do you know that I'm studying French very hard, and I came across such a strange bit the other day. It was about the funniest story I ever read. May I try and tell it to you—only I won't be able to do it any sort of justice?"

“ Yes, tell it to me, Maureen, my blessing.”

“ Well, I’ll do my best. There was James the Sixth of Scotland, who of course, you know, became James the First of England, but this queer story happened when he was only James the Sixth of Scotland. Well, of course, he was a great king and lived in great state, and one day who should visit him but an Ambassador from the great Court of Spain. The Ambassador wore magnificent clothes, and the King was greatly taken with him and talked very big to him, and tried to make out that Scotland was a much better country than Spain; but the Ambassador did not believe him, so he said, ‘ I see, your Majesty, that you are surrounded by courtiers and professors of all sorts, but I don’t see anywhere a Professor of Signs.’ Well, of course, King James was dreadfully puzzled, but he was not going to give in, not for a minute; so he said at once, ‘ Our great University is at Aberdeen, and of course we have a Professor of Signs there.’ ‘ That is most interesting,’ said the Ambassador, ‘ and I should much like to see him.’ ‘ You shall,’ said the King. ‘ You shall go to Aberdeen to-morrow and see the Professor of Signs.’ Then the King called his learned men around him and sent one of the most learned to Aberdeen to arrange that at the University there should be a Professor of Signs dressed in academic robes ready to meet the Ambassador from Spain. He came back early in the morning and told the King it was all right. He said they had found a one-eyed

butcher who was something of a wag, and that they had induced him to come to the University and meet the Ambassador from Spain. So the one-eyed butcher went and sat in his chair of state in his beautiful robes, and by-and-by the Ambassador from Spain arrived, and the other professors came out to welcome him, and they said to him how proud they were to meet so great and distinguished a man. 'But,' said the Ambassador, 'I particularly want to see your Professor of Signs.' 'Oh, *that's* all right,' said the professors; 'he is waiting for you in the next room.' They took him in and left him alone with the Professor of Signs. The Professor glowered at him, but didn't utter a word. The Ambassador, however, went boldly up and raised one finger and pointed to the Professor of Signs. Instantly the Professor of Signs took two fingers and shook them in the face of the Ambassador, whereupon the Ambassador took three fingers and held them very close to the Professor of Signs. Then the Professor of Signs got very red, and he clenched his great brawny fist and shook it violently at the Ambassador. The Ambassador immediately went up to him and offered him a large orange. The Professor of Signs pushed the orange away, thrust his hand into his pocket, and pulled out a lump of oat-cake. After that the Ambassador went into the next room. 'Well,' said the professors, who were waiting in great anxiety, 'how did you get on?' 'Wonderful!' said the Ambassador, 'too wonderful, I could not have believed it if I

had not seen it. When I went in I held up one finger to show him there was *one God*, whereupon he instantly held up two to me, in order to remind me that there was the Father and the Son. I then held up three to him to show that I recognised the Trinity, whereupon he clenched his mighty fist and showed me that he agreed with me. I then offered him a beautiful orange to show him how the good God gives us of the fruits of the earth, but he—he did better than that—he rejected the orange and offered me oat-cake, the sustenance of man, his life. Oh, it was marvellous!’ So the Ambassador went back highly pleased to the Court of King James I., but when he was well on his homeward journey, the professors rushed into the room where the butcher was seated, and they said to him, ‘What do you think of the Ambassador; how did you get on with him?’ ‘What did I think of him,’ said the one-eyed butcher. ‘I tell you he was a mocking scoundrel, and I was all but taking his life. He came in to me and pointed a finger at me to show that I had but *one eye*, but I shook *two fingers* at him to show that my *one eye* was as good as his two. Then he pointed three fingers at me, as much as to say that he was the better man; but I doubled my fist in his face, and then he brought me a bit of fruit from his country—an orange—a common orange; and I showed him what we men of Scotland live on—oat-cake, the staff of life.’”

The Rector was intensely amused at Maureen’s

story, inquired what French book she had got it out of, and really, for the time, in this bright little girl's presence, he forgot himself and his anxieties. They went on chatting and laughing. The air blew soft as a zephyr, and Uncle Pat thought less of his troubles; the colour came into his cheeks and the light into his eyes. Maureen from her earliest days had been a born story-teller, and her uncle was wondering if her undoubted talent might not be turned to account for her benefit later on. They told many other stories, each to the other, but suddenly Maureen uttered an exclamation.

"Look, do look, Uncle Pat," she cried.

There was Dominic coming towards them. He had got over his fit of intolerable crying, and managed, by washing his face, to get rid of the tears which had disfigured it so badly. When he saw Uncle Pat and Maureen chatting and laughing together, he felt in a dream; but it was a happy dream, and his spirits revived.

"Daddy," he said, "the 'Step' is at Kingsala."

"Yes, my boy."

"Well, I have brought this tray out. Here is a cup of chocolate for you which Pegeen made. I went to her myself to the kitchen and I saw her make it, with the purest milk and not one drop of water. Then she cut a lot of bread and butter and made some toast for you, and she clapped her hands when she heard 'Step' was away; and here are beautiful strawberries for yourself and Maureen and for me.

We are going to have a jolly picnic tea all together seated on the periwinkles."

"I have had a very jolly time with Maureen. She is a very clever little girl," said the Rector.

"Oh, don't let's talk about me," said Maureen. "Now, sip your chocolate, dearest darling, and let's be as merry as merry can be. Oh, I say, aren't these strawberries gorgeous. *You* planted them, you know, Uncle Pat; they are the latest variety, and you said they would be first-rate."

"And they are," said the Rector. "I declare I feel quite hungry."

He sipped his chocolate and ate a little of the ripe fruit, and the children watched him and ate bread and butter and drank tea and took what strawberries were left. By-and-by it became a trifle chill, where-upon Maureen instantly took the part of a small mother and wrapped her uncle up and took him back to the house.

There was a turf fire blazing even on this hot June day in the Rector's study, and Maureen managed to step behind and whisper to Dominic, "*I know*. I didn't worry him by asking him. I told him stories instead. We've just got to be *brave*, Dom, boy, and keep his spirits up. We need not question about what we know. When I looked in his face, I felt that I could not utter a word, for his dear face told me. It was so very near the angels, so I had one good story which I told him, and I invented some more, and I vote that now we call Denis and

Kitty and have some games and fun—not too noisy, you know—and I'll see the darling, darling Uncle to bed myself. He says I'm a born story-teller, but *I* think I'm a born nurse. He shall be in bed before old 'Step' comes back. I'll manage that."

About nine o'clock Mrs. O'Brien returned. Her cold sort of beauty, for she was still comparatively young, had a triumphant gleam in it on this occasion. She ate a large supper heartily, and did not once inquire about her husband's state of health. Some years ago, when her husband's cough troubled her, she arranged a large luxurious room on the first floor for herself, but he continued to sleep, when he could sleep at all, in the bare apartment where he had lived with such happiness with his first dear wife. In this room Dominic and Denis and Kitty were born. In this room the first Mrs. O'Brien had passed on into the Holy City.

On this special night something induced Constance O'Brien to go up to her husband's bedroom. He was dropping asleep as she bounced in.

"Well, old man," she said, "you may as well know the truth. Your own money, all your insurances, in fact, every penny you possess, will go to your children and to no one else at your death, be it to-day or be it to-morrow. This is owing to your marriage settlement. It is well I have money of my own. Murphy astonished me by telling me that there would be altogether about ten thousand pounds, including, of course, your private means, to divide among your

three children. It is as well I have my own drop, which is a trifle more than that. Let me tell you, Patrick—take it as a night-cap—that you have behaved in the most disgraceful way to me; but, anyhow, I have the pleasure of informing you that you cannot touch *one penny* for Maureen. Yes, I *have* that pleasure, little spiteful interloper. I never could abide her.”

“Good-night, Constance,” said Patrick O’Brien, “and try, my wife, to keep your heart from hard thoughts. For, believe me, when you come to stand where I now stand—on the edge of the world—you will be glad, very glad, that you have done so.”

Mrs. O’Brien, for reply, whisked away.

“The doctor certainly said he *might* last for years,” she whispered under her breath. “If it only could be a little shorter! Anyhow, Maureen has nothing. Had I known that those children will be so well off and that he would not be able to leave me a penny, I would have taken precious good care never to marry him. But there! for his ten thousand pounds; I have at least fifty thousand, and I am young still, not quite forty. I shall do my best for my own girls, and even exaggerate a little with regard to their fortunes. Henrietta ought to turn out quite pretty, and Daisy has the most lovely hair I ever saw. Yes, they will both marry well; I’ll see to that; and in all probability I shall myself marry again. I know I’m good-looking. Mrs. Rankin told me so this very day. It is a hard trial to be tied

to a broken-down husband. I told her how ill he was. I think it well to spread these reports. He certainly doesn't *look* as though he'd live for years. Poor, stupid, old Pat. He thought to affect me with that story of his brother, but I am not that sort of woman, thank goodness."

Meanwhile another glorious summer day dawned on the world. Mr. O'Brien ordered the phaeton to be brought round at ten o'clock, and, accompanied by his young son Dominic, went to see Murphy, the well-known solicitor at Kingsala. Murphy received him with the affectionate, warm-hearted greeting which characterises good-tempered Irishmen. O'Brien put the whole case before him. Murphy listened attentively, tapping his heel now and then, and now and then giving a low, significant whistle under his breath. When the story had come to an end there was a complete silence between the two men for the space of a minute. Dominic, who was in the background and was not noticed at all, felt strangely uncomfortable, for he did not like the expression in Murphy's small shrewd eyes.

At last the solicitor spoke.

"I saw your good lady yesterday, Mr. O'Brien."

"Yes; she meant to call on you."

"I am sorry to perceive that you yourself look but poorly."

"That does not matter, Murphy. I have come here to make provision for Maureen."

"But," said Murphy, "marriage settlement, you

know. It's impossible to twist a marriage settlement made prior to marriage. In that you have left everything to your own children."

"I cannot leave Maureen with no money," said the Rector. His voice was agitated, his face deadly pale, and there were drops of dew on his forehead. "Is there no possible way, Mr. Murphy," he continued, "in which my dear little niece can be provided for?"

"Well, Mr. O'Brien, right is right, and law is law, and if your children when they all come of age agree, with the sanction of the trustees, Mr. Walters of Walterscourt and Mr. O'More of Moresland, to share their money with the little girl, it can of course be done. By the way, how old is that lad there?"

"Fifteen," interrupted Dominic; "and I wish it done. I don't want to wait for any coming-of-age."

"Tut-tut, lad, you don't know the law.—Forgive me, O'Brien, but I am not very well acquainted with your family."

"There is my other son, Denis, aged eleven, and my baby, Kitty, aged six."

"Dear, dear, dear!" said Murphy. "You'd best see the trustees. I can do nothing, and I doubt if they can until your youngest child is of age; then of course the matter can be easily arranged and your little property divided into four instead of three shares."

"Thank you," said Mr. O'Brien.

He rose feebly. "I wrote to my trustees last night," he went on, "asking for an appointment. My time is short, and something must be done. I will go and see them immediately."

The tall, distinguished-looking clergyman left the room with his hand resting on Dominic's square young shoulder.

"I should like to spite that woman," thought Murphy, when the clergyman had left. "How bitter—how savage she was when she spoke to me yesterday; but God knows I can't see my way, and I am quite sure that O'More and Walters will agree with me. Sometimes marriage settlements can be very troublesome, although, on the other hand, they are the salvation of many a home. Poor, dear O'Brien, how well I remember when he signed that settlement, and the pretty, sweet girl who was with him, looking like the angel she was. Ah, they were happy, those two. There's a nice little sum accruing for those three children, for I see to all O'Brien's investments; and the five thousand pounds which he has paid for in the London Assurance has increased mightily in value. There will really be much more than ten thousand pounds to give to those three, but as to the little niece—well, there's a clause providing for the education of O'Brien's own children, but not a penny, not a penny for her. Poor little lamb, I shouldn't like to be left in my fine *lady's* tender care. I wonder what will happen? Upon my word, I'm downright

interested, and the poor fellow looks deadly bad. If his mind was at rest he might hold out for a year or two, otherwise—dear, dear, there's a lot of trouble in this world."

CHAPTER III.

KINGSALA BY THE SEA.

IF there was a town which was unlike any other town that was ever built, it was Kingsala by the sea. Kingsala had a land-locked harbour and an outer harbour beyond that, and beyond that again the mighty Atlantic with its rolling waves; and nothing between it and America. Kingsala lived for itself. It had in especial its World's End, a part of the town much respected by the poor folk. Here the fish were put out to dry, and the little half-naked children raced about in the sunshine. They were dark-eyed, dark-browed, dark-complexioned, and it was a well-known fact that their ancestors came from Spain in the time of the Spanish Armada, when those who were saved settled down at the World's End. Here they married bonny, bright-eyed Irish girls, and from that day to this their children were dark and wild and fierce, with the blood of the Spanish mariner in their veins.

But beyond the World's End came the town. The town was most peculiar. It had no foot-paths, and was full of large and straggling houses. The principal street in the town was called Fisher Street.

This led to the Stony Way on the right, and on the left to the Long Quay. There was also the Short Quay or Patrick's Quay. The houses were very capacious and even handsome, and although the street view in Fisher Street was ugly enough, the back view made up for everything, for each house, at least on the sea-side, looked out on a garden beautifully kept, with a low wall at the far end. In the centre of the wall was a little gate. Opening the gate, you went down wooden steps to where a boat was fastened. You had but to loosen the boat and step into her and float away into the land-locked harbour, or, if you liked, go farther into the outer harbour.

In the summer time the whole of the beautiful land-locked harbour was covered with a sort of phosphorescence, which caused the water to look like living fire. Many a young lad who lived in Kingsala spent the night in the inner harbour, stretched fast asleep in the bottom of his boat. In the evenings hardly any of the "Quality," as they were called, were seen in the streets. They were as a rule floating about in the harbour, singing, chattering, laughing, or exchanging confidences one with another. The land-locked inner harbour was in the summer months transformed into a sort of drawing-room, where friends met friends, exchanged the news—very small and very local—and arranged picnics at the Platters and Dishes the next day.

The "Quality" of Kingsala had little or nothing

to do. They were without exception gentlefolks living on their means. Work was a thing unheard of; it was not gentlemanly. You might fish, you might hunt, but work for a living—never. Pleasure was the order of the hour.

Kingsala was what was called a “soft” place, which expression means that in the summer the sun was bright and glorious without being too hot, and that in winter the mists fell, although nobody minded them in the least. It is true they shut out all views of the lovely harbour, with its Old Fort at one side and its Charles Fort at the other. Frost hardly ever visited this part of the world, but the finest of fine rain blotted out the view completely. On these occasions the girls—and very handsome girls they were—put on their waterproofs and flirted with the officers in the garrison-town, meeting them in a place which was called The Green, and enjoying life to the uttermost. These girls never thought about age. They wanted to have a good time, and they could not possibly tell you what age they were; the subject of age was taboo at Kingsala. The people were good-natured and most neighbourly.

If a very poor family of little or no means took a house there, the said family lived as a matter of course on their neighbours, breakfasting in one house, lunching in another, having a picnic tea in another, and dining in a fourth. They were always welcome. They lived practically for nothing, except for the small trifle they paid for the rent of their dwelling.

Certainly Kingsala was the home for the very poor, but it had one peculiarity which greatly added to its many charms.

Leaving the sea behind you, you walked up Break Heart Hill or the Green Hill or the Stony Steps, whereupon you found yourself on what we will call the Round Hill. Here were to be seen spacious houses, where those who really *had* money resided. Here were to be found the aristocracy of the little place.

Walking over the Round Hill, you obtained a view of every part and every side of the inner harbour, and it was here, in the very best position, that O'Brien's two trustees, O'More of Moresland and Walters of Walterscourt, resided side by side. They had each a large stone house, with big gardens and every imaginable luxury.

These men were, for Kingsala, thought very rich indeed. Walters was perhaps the richer, but O'More had the bigger heart.

On the night before his intended visit to these good gentlemen, the Rev. Patrick O'Brien wrote a letter to each telling them that he meant to see them both at O'More's house on the following day. He said in his letter, "I particularly want to see you both together. The matter is of urgent moment, and I trust you will both manage to meet me at Moresland."

The two trustees certainly did manage to meet Mr. O'Brien. He took a circuitous drive to Mores-

land in order to avoid the steepest of the hills; thus he had to pass through the World's End. The smell of the drying fish was very distinct, and Dominic found himself sniffing somewhat disdainfully, whereupon his father said, "Why now, my brave avick, whatever are you turning up your nose for?"

"I'm sorry, pater; but I must say it's a nasty smell," said the boy. "The place looks so terribly dirty, and all those fish hanging out to dry give me an uncomfortable feeling."

"Ah, laddie, it's plain to be seen, you don't know your Ireland as you ought. Now, listen. I can tell you a bit of a yarn. It's as true as you are sitting by my side. There was a farmer man, O'Donovan by name, who owned a biteen of land, no bigger than a quarter of an acre, just beyond the Beyonds, and he took it into his numbskull, after making his fortune by that fish that you despise, to visit London town and see the world. He was taken ill there, and not all the sights of great London could cure him—not the King's Palace, nor the Crystal Palace, nor the two great cathedrals (Westminster and St. Paul's), nor the Picture Galleries. He looked at them all, forsooth, but not a word did he utter, and he grew weaker and weaker until at last he wouldn't go out at all, and he lay on his bed moaning just piteous to hear. Well, avick, what do you think? He had made his home with a sister of his who was accustomed to the place, and she had a family of children and a husband, and she was shrewd enough

to guess what ailed him, and she also knew what would cure him, so she sent very privately to her brother, who was still curing fish at the World's End, and one morning what should arrive but a little parcel by post. It was packed up very shabby, and the postman didn't seem to think much of it; but she sprang on it, and told the postman to be off and about his business, for she had got something that would cure her brother. She opened the parcel just under the sick man's nose. He was nearly gone by then, but when he smelt the fish—the dear little bit of dried fish, which the shabby little parcel contained, he raised himself upright in bed and cried aloud with a great strong voice, 'My native air, my native air,' and he hugged the fish to him and kept sniffing and sniffing; and the sister, being a knowing body, packed him back to his native air, and he's as well as ever now. Why, talk of angels, O'Donovan, there you are yourself. The blessings of the morning on you; and how are you finding yourself this beautiful day?"

A rough-looking, red-haired man came up. His nose was nothing to speak of, but his eyes were blue as the sky.

"Ah, and it's your Riverence," he cried. "As to me, I'm as strong and hearty as can be. Why, it was dying I was in that horrid London. The breath was nearly out of me; but my native air soon pulled me round. Biddy was a cute woman, your Riverence. But come now, you don't look too well yourself, Mr. O'Brien. It's me that is sorry to see you so poorly-

like. And is that your young son, sir? May Heaven bless him. He's a real fine avick, but my recommend for you is to come and live in the World's End, your Riverence. You'd soon get back your hearty ways in a place like this."

"I'm afraid the air would not have quite the same effect on me, O'Donovan," said the Rector, with that beautiful gentle smile of his. "I am glad to see you so hearty, my man. But now, I must hurry on, for I have an appointment with Mr. O'More and can't keep him waiting."

"And far be it from me to detain your Riverence. Ah, well, the Quality, they will have their fads. There's no place like the World's End. Ye could live there for ever and ever, Amen."

"Well, good-bye, O'Donovan. My blessings on you," said the Rector.

A few minutes later the Rector and the boy were shown into a large, handsomely furnished dining-room at Moresland, where both Walters and O'More were waiting for him. Each man gave the Rector a hearty greeting, and each man shook hands with Dominic and looked him straight in the eyes.

A minute or two later a rough-looking wench appeared with a silver tray piled with good things, which, as Mr. O'More remarked, "The youngster may tackle while we are talking business."

"Not that you look too well yourself, O'Brien," said Walters.

"I'd hardly know you, man," said O'More.

"Come now, have a glass of whisky punch—the very best in the land. The real potheen. It's hard to get in these times when the excise officers are so sharp, but Mary there keeps me well supplied. We'll just have a grand brew, and then you can tell us what is weighing on your mind."

The Rector certainly did feel strangely weak. But when Walters prepared the potheen, as he alone knew how, and when the three men found themselves with a brimming tumblerful each, "and a little one for the kid," said O'More, they were all about to sip the cordial when O'Brien interposed.

"Not for my boy, thank you, O'More. He never touches that sort of thing. He's in rude health, God bless him. As for me, I will take a sip or two, for I get fits of tiredness now and then; nothing to grumble at, the Lord's name be praised! But now, may I tell you why I've come?"

"We are prepared to listen," said O'More.

Then and there the story was told. The possibility—for the Rector did not make it more at that moment—of his own death; and his earnest desire that Maureen, the only child of his dead brother, should be left provided for; that in short she should have her share with Dominic and Denis and Kitty.

"I have," said the Reverend Patrick, "insured my life for five thousand pounds. I insured it in the London Assurance Company when I was a very young man, so that I have several good bonuses. In fact, my five thousand must be nearly six or seven

thousand by now. In addition, I have, as you know, five thousand of my own private means. Now, my desire is, not being as strong as I could wish, to settle one-fourth of what I possess on my little Maureen. I suppose there will be no difficulty?" The Rector looked full up as he spoke, with his sweet, dark, handsome eyes. "There can be no difficulty, can there, O'More?"

"Marriage settlement," was Walters' interruption.

"Well, yes, I did make the settlement before I married my poor dear wife."

"And you settled all that money on her and her children?"

"I did, and would have settled ten times as much if I had had it to settle. But she has long gone to the Land of the Blessed. I have adopted Maureen, and must provide for her. I want a deed of gift to be drawn up, giving the child an equal share with her three cousins of whatever money there is when I pass from the world."

O'More looked at Walters. Walters rose and paced the room. He paced it once, and then twice; then he said abruptly, "The only way you can provide for Maureen, Patrick, old man, is by living yourself. There is no earthly reason why you should not live until your children are of age; then if they wish it, we can easily draw up a deed of gift."

"But my little Kitty is only six years old," said the Rector. "Ah, my friends, I can't live as long

as that. I know it. I don't want to talk of it, but I know it."

"Father, dear father, we'll manage it somehow," interrupted Dominic.

"Sit down, laddie, and let your father speak," said Walters. "You are down-hearted, O'Brien."

"And for my part," said O'More, "I should like to know what is to become of your second wife. I hear plenty of talk of her being a very fine lady indeed. I suppose if such an unlikely thing did happen as your being called hence, she naturally would take care of the little one."

"Ah, there is the trouble," said O'Brien. "My wife has abundant means of her own. Fifty thousand pounds of her own, no less. She has two daughters, and she intends to spend all her money on them, and refuses to do anything for my pretty Maureen."

O'More suddenly got up, went over to Walters and whispered something into his ear. Walters nodded emphatically.

"Perhaps we have no right to tell you, sir," said O'More, "but I think the time has arrived for you to get a bit of comfort out of it. At the time of her marriage your second wife was madly in love with you. Was that not so?"

"I thought it was so at the time," said O'Brien.

"Well, she proved it in a very decisive way, for we both received a letter from her lawyers in London, Messrs. Debenham and Druce, who told us that she had made a will in your favour, and that if by

any chance she died before you, her property was to be equally divided between you, and her children and yours, including Maureen by name."

"Constance *couldn't* have said that," said the Rector.

"She did. It is all in black and white. And I have a copy of the will, which I asked the London lawyers for, and Maureen's name is mentioned."

"Ah, well," said the Rector, rising, "she is a strong woman and still quite young. I have but little chance of surviving her."

"She has made that will in your favour," said Walters sententiously. "And as far as I can tell has never altered it. Even the youngest of us cannot but remember that in the midst of life we are in death. But I must tell you plainly, O'Brien, that your *settlement* cannot possibly be altered until your youngest child comes of age."

On their way home young Dominic did all that he could to cheer and help his father.

"You must lie down when you get in, dad, and afterwards Maureen and I will give you a right good time on the periwinkles. Think of it, dad—chocolate and strawberries and cream, and Maureen and I! Oh, let's be happy in the present."

"My boy, my boy," said the Rector, "I wish I could. With all my heart I wish I could; but it is just the awful, terrible present which affects me."

Little did either of these two guess that the pres-

ent was being settled for them, and in the most unlooked for way.

After visiting her husband on the previous night, Mrs. O'Brien, quite contrary to her usual custom, slept very badly. The Rector's face seemed to haunt her, and a sudden memory haunted her still more. She recalled what she had forgotten during the four years of her married life—the will which she had made in favour of her husband, her own two children, and the young O'Briens, including Maureen. By this will she divided her very considerable property among all these people. She was deeply in love at the time, for the Rector of Templemore was a very fascinating man. *Then* she had loved him; now she felt that she hated him; but she did not hate him so completely as she hated Maureen. What a fool she had been four years ago! She knew exactly what she must do. This will must be replaced by another. She would go immediately, that very day, to Murphy, and have a new will duly drawn up in case of her death, leaving everything to her children. She knew it could be easily done; and there was after all no great hurry, for the Rector was dying, poor man, and the will only held good if he survived her. As she herself was in the rudest health and was still comparatively young, there was little chance of such a catastrophe taking place, but still she might as well be on the safe side. That will must be replaced by another. It was quite an easy matter.

Behind the old house was the great empty stable-

yard, paved with its huge cobble-stones. Here on Sunday the neighbouring gentry put up their horses and carriages in the neglected stables, and laughter and high mirth were the order of the hour; for the gentry, grand as some of them were, had Roman Catholic servants, Protestants being very hard to get and very bad when they were got. The Catholic had the fear of the priest on him; the Protestant feared no man.

Now the stable-yard was empty, but suddenly a young groom crossed the lady's path of vision.

"Hullo, you, Jacobs," she said. "Come here immediately. I want to drive to Kingsala. Get the phaeton ready and put on your livery. Make yourself look as smart as you can."

Jacobs scratched his head, then he pulled his forelock, and blushed very deeply.

"The masther, bless him, has taken the carriage and horse. He's away with Masther Dominic. May the Almighty kape him."

"Your master away?" exclaimed the astonished woman.

"Yes'm. I'm thinking it's to Kingsala he's gone. Terry is driving, and Masther Dominic and himself are seated inside the phaeton as cosy as you plaze. The masther axed me two days back'm if I wouldn't re-paint the carriage, for I'm what's called *Good Job* by some people. There ain't nothing I can't turn my hand to, so I ses to himself, 'Masther,' ses I,

'you get me the *combustibles*, and I'll do it up foine.' ”

“I don't want to hear your wretched stories, Jacobs,” said the angry lady. “That carriage and horse belong to me. I wish to take a drive. You have got to get me something else immediately. I must say it was extremely rude of the Rector to dare to use my carriage without my permission.”

“Rude of ‘himself’! Why, ain't ye his wife, missus? ”

“Hold your tongue, you impertinent lad, you and your combustibles! You can't even talk English. But now listen to me. I shall not go to Kingsala to-day. I shall pay a call on my old friend Colonel Herbert at Rathclaren. He will tell me what to do. Rathclaren is quite nine miles from here, so you must get me a carriage of some sort and a horse. Do you hear, Jacobs? ”

“Well,” said Jacobs, “if ye ain't *frighted*, y'ladyship, I could run round to Farmer Barrett's. He has a young colt, The O'Shee by name, and he'd lend ye the dog-cart and colt and be proud to do it I'm sure.”

“Is that the colt they are training for the races? ” said the lady.

“He is that same, and is not broke in to say wholly, m'lady; but he'll do the distance from here to Rathclaren in a twink; that is, if ye'll put up with me a-drivin' of him, and him startin' and buck-jumping. Ye were allus one to be brave, m'lady, and

we'll get to Rathclaren in no time at all, if you, so to spake, utters the word."

"Yes, I say the word. Get me the colt and dog-cart."

CHAPTER IV.

THE O'SHEE.

MRS. O'BRIEN returned to the house. She was in a very bad humour; in fact, in a shocking humour; and the first person she met was Maureen.

"Ha—ho, come here, charity child!"

Maureen, who was dusting the drawing-room assiduously, did not move a muscle, but went on with her work.

"Do you hear me, Maureen? I have spoken to you."

"No, you haven't," said Maureen. "You spoke to somebody you called a charity child—I'm not that. Do you want me for anything special, step-auntie?"

"Yes. I want to put a spoke in your wheel. Charity child or not at the present moment, you will be one soon."

"Step-auntie, why are you so unkind to me?" The sweet brown eyes became slightly moist and the lovely rosy lips trembled.

"Affected little piece," said Mrs. O'Brien. "Now, you listen to me. Whatever you call yourself now, you *will* be a charity child soon, but I wish

to give you a message. Tell that ridiculous old uncle of yours that as he chose to appropriate my phaeton and horse and my coachman to drive to Kingsala, I have made arrangements to go on most vital business to see Colonel Herbert at Rathclaren."

"Rathclaren!" cried Maureen; "but that's a long way off. You will never walk the nine miles, step-auntie."

"You hold your chatter. I know what I'm about. Jacobs has gone to fetch Farmer Barrett's young colt and dogcart. I'm going to drive there."

Maureen clasped her hands, and her pretty soft face turned white.

"Oh, step-auntie, don't—don't, I beg of you. The only colt that Farmer Barrett has got is The O'Shee, and he's not half nor quarter broken in yet. Oh, *please*, auntie, let me go for you. I will take any message you like. I'll bring Colonel Herbert to see you. Please, please, don't trust yourself to that high dogcart and Jacobs, who can hardly drive anything, and The O'Shee. I don't mind a bit walking nine miles, and I'll do it for you. Please let me."

But Mrs. O'Brien was too angry to be prudent.

"Charity child," she said, "go on with your dusting, and leave me alone. When your uncle returns, you will be able to tell him where I am. Now, I'm off to put on my finery. If you like to make yourself useful, which you never do like, you can come up with me to my bedroom and fasten my boots."

Maureen obeyed. Mrs. O'Brien's room was dainty,

and fashionable-looking, and there were all sorts of silver brushes and boxes and trays on the table, and different condiments for improving the complexion and making the fiery blue eyes look more fiery than ever.

Little Maureen, bending down in her shabby frock, with her soft brown hair falling about her shoulders, made a strange contrast to the haughty dame. Several times she tried to speak again, to urge, to beg, to implore, but Mrs. O'Brien was now absorbed in her toilet. She wanted to make herself look very effective when she visited Colonel Herbert. At last she was dressed in a style which seemed to please her. She wore a silk dress of soft pink and a toque to match with that horrible osprey, which Maureen so hated, for she knew, she had learnt the terrible cruelty that takes place in obtaining the osprey. Although she was supposed to be uneducated, she was the sort of little girl who was always picking up odds and ends of knowledge. At last there came the clatter of wheels, the shout of Jacobs' voice, and the sound of a horse's hoofs as he trod the avenue.

"Oh, auntie, if you *only* wouldn't," said the beseeching little Maureen.

"Child, I will. There is no saying what may happen if I don't go."

"May—may—I mean, would you like me to come with you?"

"You—you little brat—no. Get out of my way!"

Maureen said no more. Mrs. O'Brien with con-

siderable difficulty found herself mounted on the tall dogcart, and soon The O'Shee, the lady, and the groom were out of sight. They went like a gust of wind, as Maureen said afterwards. Her heart was beating wildly. She was full of untold terror. She had no one to confide in, however, so she went, in her accustomed, steadfast sort of way, to prepare the best dinner she could think of for Uncle Pat. Pegeen always loved to have her in the kitchen, and soon she was very busy shelling peas and removing the stalks from enormous strawberries and whipping up a great bowl of cream. She hoped that step-auntie would stay a very long time with Colonel Herbert, and that her darling Uncle Pat would come back tired, weary, no doubt, but with no one to worry him, when he sat down to his excellent dinner.

Meanwhile the lady on the dogcart had a somewhat adventurous drive, for The O'Shee, worthy of his name, bolted and jibbed and shied at every single thing he met. Jacobs had not the slightest idea how to drive, so Mrs. O'Brien, who had, whatever her faults, plenty of courage, took the reins into her own hands, relegated the groom to the back seat, and by dint of wild exertion and desperate efforts got The O'Shee to the gates of Colonel Herbert's place, Rathclaren.

Now the dogcart was exceedingly shabby and the half-broken-in colt was not a pretty object, as he stood quivering and shaking, nor was Jacobs anything to boast of, for the only decent livery was worn

by the servant who had taken the Rector and his son to Kingsala. Mrs. O'Brien therefore made up her mind to leave Jacobs and the colt and dogcart in a remote shady lane, while she herself walked gracefully up the avenue to Colonel Herbert's mansion.

Colonel Herbert was an old bachelor, one of the most noted hunters in the neighbourhood, and exceedingly particular about his dress and appearance. He had never liked Mrs. O'Brien, but he put up with her for the sake of that good man, the Rector. He certainly disliked Mrs. O'Brien's style of dress, which he considered most unsuitable for any lady. He was, however, a gentleman—every inch of him—and when Mrs. O'Brien explained that she had left her restless horse somewhere at the gates, and would like to have a talk with him over a matter of extreme privacy, he took her into his study, a luxuriously-appointed room, very different from the poor Rector's, and inquired anxiously how his dear friend the said Rector was.

"But poorly," said Mrs. O'Brien. "He may, however, revive; there is no saying. He has had the best medical advice, and I suppose will soon be himself again."

"I trust so, indeed," said Colonel Herbert. "Your husband, madam, is one of the saints of God."

"I will be honest with you," said Mrs. O'Brien. "I dislike saints."

The Colonel was a little puzzled to know how to

reply, and on such an occasion he was invariably silent.

"What can I do for you?" he said, after a very long pause.

"Well, Colonel, I'm a lonely woman, and I've really no one with whom I can talk matters over. You may possibly have heard that I personally am well off."

The Colonel nodded very gravely.

"I have two dear, sweet daughters by my first husband. Their name is Mostyn. When I married my husband, I don't mind confessing to you that I was desperately in love with him."

"Quite so—quite so," said the Colonel, who hated the subject of love more than anything in the wide world. "Mrs. O'Brien," he continued, "you had a right to give your heart to so noble a fellow. There isn't Patrick O'Brien's equal in the whole county."

"Ah, well," said Mrs. O'Brien, "you haven't lived with him day in and day out. Anyhow, I was madly in love with him then, and I made a will that in case of the extreme improbability of my dying before him, my money, which amounts to fifty thousand pounds, should be divided equally between the Rector, his children, a little girl called Maureen, and of course my own two dear lovely girls. It was a noble thing to do, don't you think so, Colonel Herbert?"

"I certainly agree with you, madam, and it must be a great relief to O'Brien, dear fellow. I could guess that he was always a bit upset about his dear

little niece Maureen—for poor Maurice died so suddenly he had not a penny to leave the child—and she motherless, and his only one. I never saw a finer pair of fellows than Pat and Maurice. Of course you have let the Rector know all about your fine determination, Mrs. O'Brien?"

"Indeed, then, I have done nothing so silly," said Mrs. O'Brien. "I must have been a bit mad when I made so ludicrous a will; but what will not love aspire to? There is not much in it after all, for it can only take effect if by a remote chance my poor weak husband survives me. If I survive him, the will is so much waste paper; but to make all things sure—for we never can tell what *may* happen to us in this uncertain world—I want either to have the will changed or to make a new one. To be plain with you, Colonel, my feelings are not what they were——"

"Dear, dear," said the Colonel; "what can possibly have changed them?"

"Oh! a thousand things, Colonel Herbert; but principally that child—or rather that *imp* Maureen—I need not go into particulars; but you as a gentleman must understand how a lady is placed. I have come here to consult you. I want your sage advice on the subject of my new will."

"How do you want it altered?" asked Colonel Herbert.

"Well, I'm particularly anxious to settle all my money on my girls by the first marriage. Can you

assist me? Can you help a lonely woman to put a wrong right?"

"My dear Mrs. O'Brien"—the Colonel rose impatiently from his seat—"it is absolutely impossible for me to help you. I am a retired Army man, not a lawyer. Go to a lawyer and he will draw you up any sort of will you desire. Now I greatly fear I am due at the County Sessions. Will you excuse me, madam? There are good lawyers in Cork and in Kingsala. But may I ask you one question? I know a little about Mr. O'Brien's affairs, and I am aware of the fact that he is especially interested in his dear little niece Maureen, the daughter of one of the best fellows that ever breathed. I suppose in readjusting your will or making a new one, you will not forget that sweet child who is loved by everyone in the place."

"Sweet child!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Brien. "Little you know her, Colonel. I tell you she can *put on* those manners, but she's a *nasty* little witch, and I *hate her*. Leave her a penny of my money—not I!"

"Then may God forgive you, madam. Now I'm afraid I must say good-morning."

It so happened that Mrs. O'Brien left Colonel Herbert's house in a towering rage. She had certainly got no comfort from that gentleman. Had he seen the shabby dogcart, the wild, half-broken-in race-horse, and poor Jacobs doing his best with him, matters might have turned out differently, but he was absorbed in his own thoughts and made up his mind

to go and see the Reverend Patrick on the morrow.

"What possessed him to marry that woman?" was his thought.

By the time Mrs. O'Brien reached the dogcart, The O'Shee was in a wild temper. He was stamping and pawing the ground and jumping from one side of the road to the other.

"It's frightened to death I be of him, m'm," said Jacobs.

"You're a fool," said Mrs. O'Brien. "Here, hold his head while I mount."

But The O'Shee did not wish to have his head held, and the lady in the pale pink silk dress had considerable difficulty in mounting into the shabby dogcart.

"I'll give it to him, little beast," said Mrs. O'Brien, as she took the whip from its place.

"For the Lord's sake, ma'am, don't lay *that* on him. He's niver had a *sthroke* on him in his life. He'll go mad entirely, ma'am. Oh, Mrs. O'Brien, ma'am, you'll be kilt entirely."

But Mrs. O'Brien's only reply was to touch Jacobs himself with the end of the whip, and then, before he could get to his place at the back of the dogcart, she laid the said instrument across The O'Shee's back. The O'Shee stood still for a minute, quivering from head to foot in unbounded amazement.

Jacobs tried to mount, but before he could do so, the lady and the horse were away. They went like a whirlwind; they went, as Jacobs described it after-

wards, like a streak of lightning. In vain the angry woman tried to pull in The O'Shee; in vain she laid the whip across his shoulders. He was off—he was away. This was truly going—this was like flying. For the first time a sensation of fear come over the woman. She did not dare to look back, but she knew she was alone. She also knew one thing, that she was not going in the direction of Templemore. The horse had it his own way this time, and he was making straight as an arrow from a bow to one of those celebrated Irish bogs, which devour man and beast so that they are never heard of again. Once in the bog, you never get out; you never can. Mrs. O'Brien knew it. She knew there was only one way of helping herself. She must spring from the dogcart before the horse reached the bog, the great bog of Anniskail.

Suddenly she flung the reins down; suddenly she made a leap from the high dogcart on to a heap of stones on the soft narrow road. She gave one terrible, piteous scream, and then lay still. Her head was doubled under her very queerly, so that it did not seem to belong to her body. An Irish peasant coming by presently came up to her, turned her round and looked at her.

“Broken neck—dead on the spot,” he said to himself; and then he thought he would begin to spread the news, until suddenly he saw in the midst of his anxiety and his great desire to be the first with such a piece of information, the well-known head of

Farmer Barrett's O'Shee looking at him out of the bog. He was up to his neck and shoulders, and all the fire had gone out of him.

The peasant untied the lady's pale pink sash. Little he cared about her in comparison with the race-horse. Other peasants came to his relief, and together they dragged the shivering animal out of the black, black bog.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAJOR AND HIS CHILD.

MAUREEN O'BRIEN had all her life been the sort of child who instinctively thought of others rather than herself. In the long, long ago, after the death of her sweet and beautiful young French mother, she had comforted her father by every means in her power. But when Maureen was very young and her father was feeling that he must bear the parting with her, and must send her to his brother in England, his own death put an end to the necessary sacrifice. The gallant Major was badly wounded in one of those terrible border wars, while trying to rescue a fellow-officer, from under the range of the enemies' guns. His brother officer lived, but Major O'Brien, after lingering long enough to obtain the Victoria Cross, and to see his only and most beloved brother and his little child, passed away to join his sweet young wife again; and Maureen, who all these six years of her young life had been taken care of in the Hills, was brought back to Ireland by Uncle Pat. There she was much loved both by Uncle Pat, who was so very like father, and also by his dear first wife, a gentle lady who took the orphan child to her heart of hearts.

In truth it would be difficult not to love Maureen, for there was something wonderfully taking about her. She was like a little woman in her ways, but she had the beautiful heart of a child. She was able to see her father before he died, and the child's wonderful self-restraint and courage amazed the Rector of Templemore.

"You are going up to God's good and beautiful world, daddy-mine," said Maureen. "I have read about it time and again. Oh, no, daddy mine, I'm not going to fret; it would be selfish for Maureen to fret; wouldn't it, daddy?"

The dying soldier managed to whisper, "Yes, Maureen. Keep up your heart, my brave one. You are going to my twin-brother, and Pat will be good to you."

Then the soldier hero ceased to speak, but there came a shining light of triumph into his eyes, and he looked up very joyfully, and thus he entered into his eternal rest.

Maureen, who had promised not to fret, kept her word like the little Briton she was, and she was in truth very happy as long as Auntie Eileen lived; but one day the call came for auntie, and she too went away—up—up—up like the lark, and Uncle Pat got very ill and the doctors ordered him abroad. While there, in an evil moment, he met the woman who became the second Mrs. O'Brien. What possessed him to marry her could never be accounted for. People whispered, however, each to the other, that *she* had

married him, taking the business entirely into her own hands. Then, indeed, peace fled very quickly from Templemore, and little Maureen began to feel the thorns of life pricking her here, there, and everywhere.

Maureen, who tried her best to love everyone, did her utmost to love her aunt. She thought that if once she could get possession of that queer, wild, fierce heart, she might be able to help dear Uncle Pat, but her efforts were unavailing. Still the child struggled on bravely, as such children will. There are not many of them in the world; the few there are, are little angels of light and messengers of peace; but Maureen never thought of herself in any sense of the word whatsoever. She was exceedingly anxious now about Uncle Pat; but what was she to do about step-auntie. When in India she had learned the art of riding perfectly. She could ride almost any buck-jumping pony in the station, and she was the admiration of her father's regiment. She kept her seat by a sort of miracle, and was adored and petted by all the ladies and the gentlemen alike.

Since she had arrived at Templemore there was no horse for her to ride. She missed this indulgence for a short time, but then she forgot it in the real cares of life.

On this special day when step-auntie had gone to Rathclaren, and Uncle Pat and Dominic were in Kingsala, the little girl felt remarkably uncomfortable. There was great quiet in the house, for Denis

and Kitty were both at school, and Pegeen was in the best of humours, with "Herself" away, and little missie, the darlin', keeping her company.

"Well, to be sure," said the old cook, when everything was prepared for dinner. "I hope to the Lord the Colonel will keep herself until we has had our male in paice and quiet. The likes of her was niver seen to my way of thinking."

"Oh, please don't talk against her—please," said Maureen in her gentle voice.

"And whyever not, to be sure, at all, at all? Why, if there's a nasty, mane hag of a made-up woman in this wide, wide wurld, it's herself. It's breaking the masther's heart she be, and as to her cruelty to yez, my purty wan, don't we all of us remark on it, and don't we just rage about it? Oh, me fine lady indade!"

"Pegeen, please, Pegeen," said Maureen, "I want to ask you a question so badly. You know step-auntie has gone away with Jacobs on Farmer Barrett's very tall dogcart with The O'Shee between the shafts."

"Sakes alive!" cried Pegeen; "that nasty, ill-timpered, half-broken-in colt? Herself must be mad—that's all I can say! Why, the farmer was talking a week past that iver was; and he said he couldn't make annything o' the O'Shee, the little baste was so nasty in his timper. Well, to be sure, *she'll* break her neck, as sure as I'm here."

"Who'll break her neck," said Maureen, whose

face turned like a white sheet. "Is it the horse or step-auntie—or—or Jacobs?"

"Lord love ye, child, maybe it'll be the whole three ov 'em—I can't say, I'm sure. Miss Maureen, set ye down this blessed minit, and I'll git ye a drop of potheen."

"No, no; you know I never touch such a thing," said Maureen.

"Then whyiver have ye turned so white? Be the powers! ye can't luv herself?"

"I—I think perhaps—perhaps I do a little," said Maureen. "If she wouldn't call me 'charity child' I'd love her. Pegeen, darling, what does charity child mean?"

"Bless yer swate heart, it's what ye'll niver be. Why, there ain't a bhoy in Ireland that wouldn't stand up and say no to that!"

"Is it very awful?" asked Maureen.

"Don't ax no questions and ye'll be tolt no lies," was Pegeen's remark.

Maureen remained a minute or two longer in the kitchen, then she looked at the clock and went slowly up to her shabby bedroom.

"Charity child or not," thought the little girl, "I must try and save her. It's a long walk, but the day is early yet. I could quiet the poor O'Shee. I haven't forgotten what father told me. How well I remember his saying, 'Just a touch of your hand, Maureen, very firm and very coaxing, and you'll get any horse to follow you round the world.'" So

the child in her little brown frock, which looked exceedingly shabby, and with a small old, worn-out brown hat to match, started on her walk to Rathclaren.

Nobody saw her go. The servants, taking advantage of both master and mistress being absent, were talking loudly in the big kitchen. The gardeners had joined the group. Pegeen was helping the company to porter and great chunks of kitchen cake, and they were all laughing and joking, praising Maureen, shaking their heads sorrowfully about the master, and grinning with delight at the way they hoped The O'Shee would sarve herself.

Pegeen was a confirmed gossip, and told the story of what the child had just said to her.

"Charity child, indade! Bless her, bless her! Why, I—I'd just *die* for the likes uf her," said one of the men; and these remarks were echoed by both men and women. "Their darling—their Miss Maureen—their purty—purty wan! Why, now, ain't she just the light o' our eyes," said one and all.

And meanwhile the dinner for the poor Rector was being destroyed in the oven, the potatoes and peas were overboiled, and all that remained of Maureen's nice dinner was a glass dish of piled-up strawberries and a dish of cream.

"May the Vargin help me! The duck is done to rags!" cried Pegeen. "Whatever now will Miss Maureen say, and the master may be back, bate

out, anny minit. Oh, worra, worra, whatever am I to do?"

"I'll kill a fresh wan for yez and pluck it, and ye can push it in the oven," offered an affectionate gardener, who, according to the Irish way, preferred any business to his own.

Meanwhile Maureen went rapidly on her way. There was not a bit of the country that she did not know as though it were a map stretched out before her. She was therefore able to take several short cuts through woods rich with summer foliage, where periwinkles and other flowers of all sorts and descriptions grew in abundance, where moss pressed softly under her feet, where the birds sang, the doves cooed, and all nature was at rest and peace.

At another time Maureen would have stood silent in the midst of the wood and clasped her hands and thanked God for His beautiful world, but she was too anxious to do anything of the sort now. She must at any risk, at any cost, save step-auntie. She was a very quick walker for her age, and got over the ground in great style. Suddenly she found herself close to Rathclaren, having gone most of the way through shady woods and dells. Close to the gates of Rathclaren she distinctly saw the marks of horses' hoofs, but as she examined them they seemed to be going away from the stately old place. There was a decided scuffle at the beginning of a boreen or lane, and then the marks of the said hoofs going very fast indeed.

Maureen clasped her hands in distraction. She knew this borean. It was one of the most dangerous in the neighbourhood, and led straight to the great bog of Anniskail. Suddenly she saw two men coming to meet her; one was Colonel Herbert, who was always a special friend of hers, and the other was poor Jacobs, who looked absolutely wild with distraction and fear.

"Where have you dropped from, baby?" said the pleasant voice of the Colonel.

"Oh—oh, Colonel Herbert," gasped Maureen, "I know a little bit about horses, being trained when I was in India, and—and I'm so *terrified* about Auntie!—And what are you doing here, Jacobs?" The child's voice got quite angry. "Why ever are you not with your mistress?"

"It warn't my fault, missie; it warn't, indade!"

"Oh, don't say whose fault it was. What has happened?"

"She laid the sthroke of the whip acrost me first and thin acrost The O'Shee, and was it to be wondered at that the baste wouldn't sthand the whip, niver having tasted it in all his life! He jest shivered from head to foot, and afore I could git up ahint on the dogcart, he was off and away like a streak o' greased lightning. She druv him herself and whipped him all the time. I went up to tell the Colonel and——"

"Don't—don't say any more," said Maureen.—
"Colonel, will you help me?"

"I will, my dear little girl."

"There is Anniskail at the other end of this road," said the child. "Oh, oh, how am I to bear it!"

"There's my dogcart coming down the avenue, dear. Jump up beside me, and we'll go straight for the bog. I have ropes and things handy, and we may pull her out if we don't delay a second."

Maureen, like a little sprite of the air, was soon seated beside the Colonel on the dogcart. How fast they went—how fast! How close they got to disaster, to tragedy unspeakable! The Colonel guessed the worst; he did not attempt to speak. The child shivered but kept her self-control.

Jacobs and the Colonel's own groom were seated at the back of the dogcart. Colonel Herbert's powerful horse covered the ground with right good-will. Almost the whole of the lane was more or less boggy, and great splashes of soft mud flew up as the dogcart got over the ground.

Suddenly the Colonel pulled up his horse, threw the reins to his groom, and motioned to Jacobs to follow him.

"There has been a spill," he said. "It is no sight for little girls. You'd best stay where you are, Maureen, acushla. We'll do all that human beings can, and a lot of peasants are there already."

"And do you think I am going to stay behind?" said Maureen. "Oh, there, I see her pink dress! Oh, poor step-auntie! Yes, I will go—I will! She

has only fallen—she'll be all right. You can't keep me back—I will go. She may call me charity child every day of her life, but I don't mind. I'm going to her now."

The Colonel took the little hot hand. There was something impossible to resist about Maureen.

In a very few minutes they found themselves the centre of a group of rough-looking men and women.

"Ah, thin, bless yer heart, Colonel dear; ah, thin, it's the neck of her is broke entirely. See for yer-self. She *was* a foolish woman. The bog would have quieted the horse, and she'd have had a few minutes afore she went under; but no, she'd no sinse at all, at all, and out she lepped on to that big lot o' stones, and the neck of her was broke."

"I war the first to find her, sir," said an old peasant. "I saw at wanst she was as dead as a tenpenny nail, so I tuk her sash and made a sort o' rope wid it and pulled the poor baste ashore. He's safe enough is The O'Shee; but herself, glory be to God, she's bruk her neck! Why, Miss Maureen, I didn't see ye, me darlint; don't ye cry now!"

"I'm not going to cry," said the child. "Do turn her round very gently. Do at least *try* to make her look nice! Poor, poor step-auntie, poor step-auntie! Colonel, get me some water. I want to wash her face. Colonel, you must help me to tell Uncle Pat."

The amazing presence of mind of the child soothed the excited Irish folk. One after another

they brought her what she required, and finally the poor body was laid on a shutter and brought into a cabin near by. It looked quite peaceful, and no one living had seen that terrible leap nor heard that most piercing shriek.

"We must leave her here at present," said the Colonel, turning to Maureen.

"Yes; she and I will stay together," said the child. "She isn't angry with me any longer. God has taken away her anger. See, she smiles. You must break it to Uncle Pat, Colonel. I'll stay with her until she can be moved."

"She shall be moved to my house at Rathclaren," said the Colonel. "It can easily be managed, my brave little girl. But you can do no good here. Had you not better come with me?"

"No, no; I'll stay with her. She's not angry with me any longer. Please, Colonel, be *very* quick, and don't frighten Uncle Pat, for he's far from strong."

CHAPTER VI.

COLONEL HERBERT TO THE RESCUE.

THERE are times in life when the brain ceases to act—that is, consecutively—when the heart ceases to perform its usual functions, and when all life, and all that life means, becomes topsy-turvy. This happened to be the case with little Maureen O'Brien. When she entered Colonel Herbert's house looking brave and upright, never shedding a tear nor uttering a sigh, that brave little heart of hers suddenly gave way. She fell down in a deep and prolonged swoon. When she came to herself again she was in a small white bed, and two nurses were taking care of her. She did not recognise the room, and she did not recognise the nurses. They were of no moment to her. She passed quickly away again into a sort of trance, not a death trance by any means, but a fever trance. During that time she talked a great deal about step-auntie, and said with bright, uplifted eyes: "I don't mind being a charity child, step-auntie; I don't mind one little bit."

Uncle Pat came to see her, and so did Dominic, but she did not know either of them. She kept on

with her eternal moan, "I don't mind being a charity child."

Then grave professional men came and stood by the little white bed and felt the fluttering pulse, and said gravely that the child was suffering from shock of a severe description.

Uncle Pat said: "Is Maureen in danger?"

They replied, "Yes, she is in great danger."

Then Uncle Pat took up his abode at Rathclaren, and Colonel Herbert endeavoured to cheer him all he could. There was a post-mortem examination on the poor wife who had broken her neck, and then there was her funeral, which was attended by almost everyone in the country, for the Irish are great at going to funerals, and do not need nor expect invitations thereto. They were interested in Mrs. O'Brien, and, although they had hated her in life, they quite loved her in death, because her death was so sudden and romantic, and, in short, what so exactly fitted their Celtic natures.

So Mrs. O'Brien was laid in the old family vault of the O'Briens in great state and unbounded respect, and the Rector gave away money freely, and so did Colonel Herbert, and the people got more drunk than ever that night at public houses; and that was the earthly end of this miserable woman.

But meanwhile a child, quite a young child, lay close to the eternal shores, upstairs in Colonel Herbert's house. Very weak she grew and very faint, and the fever ran high and yet higher, until at last

Dominic, in a fit of ungovernable grief, entered the room without any leave and held one of the little burning hands between his two manly ones; and he held it so long and so firmly that the little hand ceased to struggle and drops of dew came out on the white low forehead. Then Dominic motioned to the nurse to bring eau de Cologne and water, and the nurse, wondering at the lad and the power he showed, obeyed him to the letter.

All night long Dominic stayed by Maureen's side. What he suffered in body no words can describe, but he would have gone through worse torture for Maureen.

The doctors came and looked and whispered to each other, and one said, "This is too wonderful," and the other said, "She is asleep. Whatever happens, she must not be awakened."

Then the first doctor said to the boy, "Can you bear to kneel just as you are kneeling all night long?"

And Dominic answered, "I could bear it for every night of my life if it would save her."

So then the doctors, by Colonel Herbert's desire and by Mr. O'Brien's desire, supported the lad as best they could with pillows, and gave him sips of wine to drink, and one of the nurses got him to lean partly against her. But the cramp which was so slight at first became terrific, and the boy could have shrieked with agony. But he did not shriek,

he did not stir, for he knew without anyone telling him that he was saving the life of his little mate.

Dominic knelt by that bedside from six in the evening until six the following morning, and all that time Maureen slept away her fever and awoke to consciousness.

"Why, Dom!" she said, in the weak, weak voice of a little bird; but Dominic was in a dead faint on the floor, and was carried out of the room without Maureen seeing what happened.

He soon revived and was as well as ever again, but as long as he lived he never forgot that night when he saved the life of his little playmate.

From that moment Maureen was pronounced out of danger. A turn for the better set in, and, although the convalescence was slow, it was also sure. She was too weary to ask questions, and for the first week of her recovery she slept most of the time. Then Uncle Pat came in and kissed her, and she kissed him back and looked into his sweet, grave eyes, but still she asked no questions, nor did he volunteer any information.

After that, weeks and weeks and weeks passed, and the summer entered into autumn and the autumn into winter; and the winter was a very cold one even for the south of Ireland, but Colonel Herbert's house was well-warmed and Maureen's room contained every luxury. The two nurses, Nurse Cecilia and Nurse Nora, delighted in their life in the

luxurious mansion, and Maureen thought her own deep thoughts.

Autumn passed into winter, and on Christmas day Maureen was well enough to be dressed in a pretty soft little tea-gown of white cashmere, which Nurse Nora had made for her. Then she was laid on the couch by the glowing turf fire, and she was told that Colonel Herbert would like to see her.

"Oh, but I want to see Uncle Pat," said Maureen. "I'm beginning to remember things a little. Can I see Uncle Pat, Nurse Cecilia?"

"I don't think you can to-day, my pretty, but the Colonel is very anxious to have a little chat with you; only first he says you must have your dinner. Nurse Nora has gone to fetch it now."

Her dinner consisted of a delicious snipe, for these dainty birds abound in the boggy parts of Ireland; and she had a little glass of wine, very stimulating and strong. The wine brought the colour into her sweet cheeks and made her eyes look softer and larger than ever.

A few minutes later Colonel Herbert entered the room. He was one of the most distinguished men in the entire county, and Rathelaren was a perfectly kept place. The Colonel did not know much about girls or women, however, and was a trifle nervous as he entered the room, but when he saw the little figure on the sofa, the pink colour in the cheeks, the soft glow in the brown eyes, the hair which had been cut off during her illness but was now curling

in tight rings all over her pretty head, made this child of one of his greatest friends look altogether adorable to him.

Maureen had not lost her straightforward way. She held out a tiny hand now, which was no longer plump or brown.

"Dear Colonel," she said, "you are good."

"I hate thanks," was the Colonel's reply.

"How funny," said Maureen, with one of her merry laughs; "so do I."

"That's right, my pushkeen; then I quite expect you and I will suit each other."

"We have always suited each other," said Maureen.

"Yes, that's quite true," replied the Colonel. "And we need not talk of the past, need we, Maureen, acushla?"

"Why, of course not," said Maureen; "that is," she added, "not unless you wish to. I am beginning to remember everything now most beautifully."

"Don't talk of it, child; don't talk of it," said the Colonel.

"I won't—if it really hurts you," said Maureen. "I would not dream of hurting one so good; but please, dear Colonel—you do not mind my calling you dear Colonel, do you?"

"Not one little scrap, alanna."

"That is all right," said Maureen. "You must see that I cannot help loving you. I hope you do not mind that."

"Well—upon my word," replied Colonel Herbert, "I did not know that any one living loved me."

"Oh! but I do most truly. You see that you are a great soldierly man, and my father was your friend and the bravest of all brave soldiers. You see, dear Colonel, we are really close together. I, the daughter of a soldier; you, a soldier your very self. I cannot help loving you and feeling close to you, and I hope—I do hope that you do not mind—I want you to love me oh! so dreadfully badly, and I—well, I love you with all my heart."

The stern old Colonel never felt tears nearer to his eyes.

"Keep it up, child. I do not mind; in fact, I—I *rather* like it," he said.

"And may I call you 'dear Colonel'?"

"Yes, young 'un, yes."

"Now, please, I have been in your house a long time."

"Since the summer," said the Colonel. "A matter of close on six months."

"Well, you see, in that time a little girl gets hungry."

"Good gracious! Sakes alive! Don't they give you enough to eat?"

"Oh, yes," said Maureen; "*lashins* and *lavins*. But it isn't *that* hunger. It's here——" She put her little white hand against her heart. "I'm

hungry for Uncle Pat, and for darling Dominic, and for Denis and Kitty. When may I see them?"

"That's what I have come to you about, acushla. You see, it is this way: You had a good bit of serious illness—you're as right as a trivet now, but it might have been the other way round. Well, things happened that we needn't talk about, and your Uncle Pat wouldn't leave the house—not he, blessed man!—while you were in any sort of danger; but when all the danger was past (and I tell you, alanna, we did have one night of it)—when it was past and over and you were quite on the mend, the doctors who were looking after you took a good haul of him. My word, didn't they pull him about. Sounding him here and patting him there—they were great men, these doctors—and they said that if your Uncle Pat went off immediately to Egypt for the winter—why, he might get well or very nearly quite well. So, Maureen, you must forgive me; but I made him go, and there is a curate at Templemore; and as he couldn't go alone, Dominic went with him, and Denis and Kitty are both at boarding-school—not the school they used to go to, but a first-rate one in no less a place than old England; and I says to myself, says I, 'I can't have those bouncing brats back for the holidays; they'll be too much for Maureen.'"

"They wouldn't," murmured Maureen, but her voice was very low, and her eyes were really now full of tears, for she was too weak to keep them back.

"They are not bouncing brats, Colonel; they are darlings!"

"Well, well, child, they may be so to you; but you see I'm an old bachelor and I have my notions. So it was arranged that the pair of them should stay at school for the Christmas holidays, and for that matter for Easter as well; and the long and short of it is this, Maureen, that you have to put up with the old Colonel until the warm weather comes and your Uncle returns. For when he finds Egypt too hot, he is ordered by the doctors to go to different parts of Switzerland, and the news of him is just of the very best. I have a letter in my pocket for you, Maureen, written by himself with orders that I should give it to you on Christmas Day if it was suitable."

"Is this Christmas Day?" cried Maureen.

"Why, yes, baby; have you forgotten everything? I wanted to bring you up some plum-pudding, but Nurse Cecilia wouldn't allow it. She's something of a tyrant is that woman, though she's a first-rate nurse."

"Indeed, she is; and so is Nurse Nora," said the child. "Oh, have I indeed forgotten so much, and has the time gone by at such a rate—and aren't you—aren't you sick of me, dear Colonel?"

"Well, this is about the tune of the thing," said Colonel Herbert: "I have taken a sort of fancy to you! Oh, there, child, for the Lord's sake! *What* are you doing?" For Maureen had slipped off her couch and had twined her weak little arms round the

Colonel's neck, and given the confirmed old bachelor the first kiss he had ever received since his mother died.

"Child, child, you'll faint, or something awful will happen!"

"No, I won't. I'm not a bit fainty. I want to tell you that I love you"—here came a kiss—"and you love me"—another kiss.

"To be sure, pushkeen."

"Then *that's* all right. Put me back on the sofa, dear Colonel, and then give me Uncle Pat's letter, and then go away, please; only before you go, will you promise me one thing?"

"What is that, acushla machree?"

"I want you to come to me every day as you have come to-day until I am well enough to go to you, for we have just an awful lot to do and talk over before Uncle Pat comes back. Will you promise me, dear Colonel?"

"Yes, child. God help me, I think I'd promise you anything."

"Then *that's* all right and I *am* happy. I think I am about the happiest little girl in the world. I don't seem to have a care anywhere at all—only, please, my letter!"

"Yes, baby, only don't for goodness' sake, go and cry over it."

"You don't like cry-babies either," said Maureen.

"Of course not; they are detestable."

"Now my letter, please. Whatever you find in me, you won't find me a cry-baby."

The Colonel dropped a little packet into the child's hands and softly left the room.

"'Pon my word," he muttered to himself. "'Pon my word. I never could abide a wife, but a child like that of my very own, I could put up with her—'pon my word!"

Maureen lay for a few minutes after Colonel Herbert had left her with the unopened packet clasped in her two little white hands; and her eyes looked brighter than ever and her cheeks more rosy. In the packet were first of all quantities of enormous violets, which could be put into warm water and would revive by-and-by. Then there came two letters, one from Dominic and one from Uncle Pat.

Uncle Pat's letter was rather short. It ran somewhat as follows:

"BEST OF DARLINGS:—I get grand news of you from that fine fellow, Herbert, and if you are well enough to receive my Christmas greeting, here it is for you! The violets are from Dom. He's turning into a grand lad, and talks French to the manner born. Oh, what stories I shall have to tell you when I come home, for, Maureen—dear little Maureen—I am getting *well*. Each day I feel stronger. I am quite certain that with God's help I shall be with you when the long days come round again, and then what 'lashins' we'll have to talk to each other.

Meanwhile, it is thought best for you to stay with the Colonel. You must be very sweet to him, and not bother him more than you can help; but you might ask him to lend you some books, for he has got quantities, and he is quite a famous Egyptologist, and you will like to know about the place where I am now regaining my health.

“God bless you, my darling. God above keep you!
UNCLE PAT.”

“P.S.—I send you a cheque for £500 to do what you like with.”

The other letter was also short, but it seemed to go straight into Maureen's heart:

“Hurrah, playmate, good news—the best! The pater is getting well. We're having a right jolly time in this jolly place, and if you were with us it would be nothing short of perfection. I never did see such a magnificent country as Egypt. Oh, Maureen, the blue of the sky! And, oh, the soft delicious feel of the air; and no thought of rain, for of course it never rains. One day a week ago I went out and saw the three pyramids. I went out with a boy I came across, and he explained everything to me. He is a jolly sort, and his name is Oliver. There was the Great Pyramid with its steps, and we climbed it—every single step up to the top, and the two smaller pyramids; but the most wonderful thing of all was the Sphinx. I can't describe her to you except that

she looked *inscrutable* and wise with all the wisdom of all the ages. There was a majesty about her; but there, I can't write tommyrot. We had tea afterwards at the Meena House Hotel, and then we came back in the cool of the evening. Oh, Maureen, the world is a big, big place, and I want to be a big traveller and see every inch of it. Good-bye for the present, my little darling.—YOUR LOVING OLD DOM."

CHAPTER VII.

HAPPINESS.

THERE come in life moments, perhaps hours, perhaps days, perhaps even months of perfect bliss, and this glorious happening—these sunshiny days, hours, and months—came to little Maureen O'Brien while she lived with Colonel Herbert. She had undoubtedly had a most severe shock, and as her illness had been long and dangerous, so undoubtedly was her recovery somewhat tedious; but by degrees her little larklike voice could be heard singing about the house; and then all kinds of indescribable changes took place at Rathclaren. It was a handsome and stately home before Maureen arrived there, but now it became a beautiful home. The Colonel could not quite make out what had altered it. He did not know that a great nest of daffodils in a certain corner of his vast library made the room all aglow with light. He could not guess why the piano began to sound in the old-fashioned drawing-room, and why a pretty soft voice sang all kinds of old-fashioned songs—"The Dark Rosaleen" for one, "The Wearing o' the Green" for another, and Moore's inimitable melodies—

“ Oh, there’s nothing half so sweet in life
As love’s young dream ! ”

The Colonel had heard those words ages ago, and he now crept cautiously into the drawing-room and stood behind the little singer.

Certainly her voice was not strong, but it was at that stage of her growth a high soprano, and very clear and very true, so when she sang “ When Mal-achi Wore His Collar of Gold,” “ The Vale of Avoca,” “ Believe Me, if all those Endearing Young Charms,” “ The Minstrel Boy,” “ Those Evening Bells,” “ Rich and Rare Were the Gems She Wore,” “ The Last Rose of Summer,” and “ The Harp that Once Through Tara’s Halls,” the Colonel felt as though he were living in a new world.

When he discovered Maureen’s gift he did not get the piano tuned, which most men would have done, but got a beautiful new *boudoir grand* put in its place; and a master came twice a week from Kingsala to train a voice that needed no training, for it was Nature’s voice, just as the birds’ voices are. Thus the Colonel was intensely happy. The days sped by, and Maureen’s passion for music was gratified. Evening after evening the “ dear Colonel ” and Maureen used to enjoy those incomparable melodies together, the child singing her heart away, the man listening, never speaking, never praising, but with his own heart full to the brim of love for this queer little creature. He loved to spend money on



She could ride by a sort of instinct; she was part
of her horse.—Page 85.

Maureen, and consulted his excellent housekeeper, and bought the child suitable frocks and pretty jackets and hats, and when she was strong enough he took her out riding with him.

The first ride was a bit of a trial to the child, for she could not help thinking of poor step-auntie and The O'Shee, but after that she enjoyed herself immensely. To the astonishment of the Colonel, he found that he had to teach her nothing. She could ride by a sort of instinct; she was part of her horse. He got her a dark Lincoln green habit, and a little green velvet cap with a heron's feather in it; and no sweeter sight could have been seen than the little maid and the elderly man as they crossed country side by side.

But the Colonel knew what Maureen did not, that this golden time in his life was but an episode, that Maureen did not belong to him, and that soon—ah! too soon—the sweet presence and the voice like a bird's, and the lovely brown eyes, would leave Rathclaren and go back again to old Templemore, where Dominic and his father would be anxiously waiting for her.

While these things were happening at Rathclaren and Maureen by no effort at all on her part was making herself the idol of the entire establishment, the Rector—dear man!—was making leaps and bounds towards health. The feeling of health was in his veins, the keenness of health was in his eyes. Egypt had begun to save him, and Switzerland—se-

lected parts, of course—did the rest of the business. He would certainly be able to return to his parish duties in the early summer, just when Templemore was in its prime, when the fat kine were prosperous, and the lean kine had disappeared for the present.

The Rector was by no means sorry to live. He had been content to die—God's will was his—and he never struggled against the inevitable; but now that earthly life was really restored to him in the most marvellous and unexpected way, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of it. His wife's will troubled him, however, not a little. At first, that is, immediately after her death, it troubled him profoundly, but then Maureen's severe illness caused every thought, except of her, to fade from his mind; but when she got better and the danger passed away, the Rector's conscience smote him very hard with regard to the will. He went to see Murphy at Kingsala, he went to see O'More and Walters, and he said the same thing to each and all,

“That will ought not to be acted on. My poor wife died through an accident. Had she lived she would have altered her will, for she told me so just before her death, poor dear. In fact, I was supposed to know nothing of this will, which was made just before our marriage, when she fancied she loved me; but she certainly told me most distinctly quite lately that all her money would belong to her own two daughters. Then she was killed—you know how. The will turned up. You had a copy, O'More, and

we have heard from Debenham and Druce; but I cannot possibly see how we can act upon it—I mean as gentlemen and Christians. We take advantage of a terrible accident to destroy all my poor wife's hopes with regard to her girls."

Then Murphy said, "Now whist awhile, your Reverence, and I'll come and see you in a few days at Templemore. This requires thinking over. These aren't the days of chivalry, O'Brien, my man. Go home, rest quiet, be thankful the life of the little one is spared, and do nothing until you see me, for I'll come over to Templemore one fine morning, and have a bit of news for you as like as not."

The Rector waited with what patience he could, and the longer he waited the more sensitive did his conscience become. But at last, to his unbounded amazement, Dominic rushed in to inform him that an outside car was coming down the avenue, and there were four men on it, to say nothing of the driver; and when the four men stepped into the old house, which looked most sadly shabby without Maureen's care, the Rector found himself in the presence of Murphy the lawyer, of Mr. O'More, Mr. Walters, and of Mr. Debenham, head of the great firm of solicitors in Chancery Lane.

Now these men began at once to talk to the Rector, and they talked in a wonderfully convincing way. Their argument was this: First and foremost, the late Mrs. O'Brien had very much undervalued her property, which amounted not to fifty thousand

pounds, but after all death duties had been paid would represent the very comfortable figure of between eighty and ninety thousand pounds. This money, by the lady's desire, had remained untouched since her second marriage, and the lawyers, Debenham and Druce, by wise investments had increased the original capital very much. Now by the terms of the will this sum was to be divided in equal portions among Mrs. O'Brien's two daughters, the Misses Mostyn, the Rector's three children and his niece, Maureen O'Brien, and further, an equal share was to be given to the Rector himself.

"That is precisely how the will stands, Mr. O'Brien," said Debenham, in his extremely refined English voice, "and as all the inheritors, with the exception of yourself, are much under age, nothing whatsoever can be done to alter it until your youngest child comes of age. Now I drew up this will for the late Mrs. O'Brien. She was most sincere in her wish at the time that you and yours should share her wealth with her own two daughters. The fact is, the late Mostyn was old enough to be her father. He was a city merchant and made his pile, although it amounted to nothing like what he would have made, had he not been suddenly stricken down by apoplexy. His wife and he led a cat-and-dog life together, and I think his death was a great relief to the poor woman. Anyhow, be that as it may, Mr. O'Brien, you can part with your share of the property if you like, but the portions

set aside for the children cannot possibly be interfered with. I and my partner are trustees for the children's share of the property, and I shall provide them with ample means, which the will allows for their education, until they each come of age; more I cannot do. They will each be fairly well off, and I should strongly advise you, Mr. O'Brien, to take your own share and make no bones about it. The whole thing seems to me to be an interposition of Providence to prevent an angry and irresponsible woman from carrying out her designs. You will all be comfortably off, and I think if she could speak to you now, she would beg of you not to make your family unhappy by refusing to receive your share of the profits. After all, Mr. O'Brien, it was *you* she loved when she made the will. She did not know the children."

"God help me!" said Mr. O'Brien. "Poor Constance, I never understood her! If you really think it would please her, sirs——"

"Please her—naturally it would please her!" said O'More.

"And I shall not require it long," continued the Rector, who little guessed on that sorrowful day that he was to become quite well once more.

"There is a provision made for that in the will, sir," said Mr. Debenham, "which gives your share in equal proportions to the six children, so I do not see how in *any* case you can touch it or interfere with it. That's a fine boy of yours," continued Deb-

enham. "I rather guess that he will make money of his own, and not require any help from any one."

All these things happened while Maureen was ill, and she naturally knew nothing about them, and nothing whatever about the little fortune which had been left her by step-auntie; but as the days flew on, and April followed March and May followed April, more and more deeply did Colonel Herbert hate that will, for if it were not in existence he would simply force O'Brien to give him Maureen to be his forever, to share his money, his love, and his home.

Now it so happened that while the Rector was coming by leaps and bounds back again to life and health, two girls at school were mourning not so much for their mother, who, as a matter of fact, they did not like, but because they were not the heiresses they had hitherto called themselves to their school-fellows.

Mr. Debenham called to see these girls, one day, at their showy school near Dublin. They were like each other, and painfully like the dead woman. The lawyer could not help uttering a quick sigh when he saw them. Henrietta was the taller and stronger of the two. She was what might be described as a "bouncing young maid," very much developed in figure, with her mother's fiery blue eyes and her mother's auburn hair which tended to red. That hair was all fluffy and curly and untidy about her head. She was not a pretty girl; she had too many freckles for that; and her nose had a little tilt up

at the end, which gave to Henrietta Mostyn a particularly impertinent appearance. Daisy was very like her sister, but with a difference; her eyes were smaller and closer together, she had a cunning look about her, and her hair was of a flaxen shade without a touch of gold in it. Her eyebrows were the same colour as her hair, and her eyelashes were white. She was altogether the sort of girl whom you would rather not know, for there was a cunning, deceitful expression about her face, which no effort on her part could conceal.

"Well, so we are robbed," said Henrietta. "Poor mumsie-pumsie went to smash, and we are robbed. That's a nice look-out. Of course, you'll manage, Mr. Debenham, that those horrid O'Briens don't get our money."

"They shan't get *your* money, Miss Mostyn," said the lawyer, "but they'll get their own."

"Whatever do you mean by that? Then we do get mumsie's fortune. I said so to Daisy last night. When I want to tease her I call her *Dysy*."

"I don't think I care to listen to your remarks," said Mr. Debenham. "Your poor mother died in a very terrible way."

"Oh, don't tell me, or I'll shriek," said Daisy. "Hold me, Henny, hold me, Henny; I'll shriek!"

"Silly child," said the lawyer, "have you no self-control? I have spoken to the head-mistress of your school, Mrs. Henderson, and she understands that owing to circumstances you are not to remain here

after the summer holidays. That is the wish of your step-father and guardian, the Reverend Patrick O'Brien. You will probably be sent to another school, which I will recommend."

"But our money—the chink," said Daisy; "that's the main thing."

"You get your share, Miss Daisy. Your mother's money is divided into seven portions. Until you come of age, or marry, a certain portion will be spent on your education. After that the capital will be yours to do as you wish with. You each of you have, roughly speaking, about thirteen thousand pounds."

"Is that all?" cried Henrietta. "Why, mumsie said that we were heiresses!"

"You are, to that extent."

"But she said we should have at least fifty thousand between us, and she was going to bring us out in Dublin, and we were going to have no end of larks. What do you mean by saying that we'll have thirteen thousand pounds each?"

"How old are you, Miss Mostyn?"

"We are both of us fifteen," said Daisy. "Twins, dear little twins. But please tell us, we want to know what has become of all the rest of mumsie's money?"

"She left her entire property," said the lawyer, "to be divided into seven portions. These portions were to be divided between yourselves, Mrs. Mostyn's second husband, the Reverend Patrick O'Brien,

his three children, and his dear little niece. None of you can touch the capital until you come of age. Kitty O'Brien is at present only six. Her portion, therefore, will in all probability be the largest, as there will be a greater time for it to accrue. By the way, your mother made one provision, which I rather fought against, but she was determined. You are not any of you to come of age until you are twenty-five."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Henny.

Daisy burst into tears.

"I'll be a beastly old maid by then," she sobbed.

"Well, good-bye, children, good-bye. Your poor mother is gone, and you must make the best of what is to you a bad job. But you have got a delightful step-father, who will do his utmost for you so as to bring you up in the fear of God, and I am sure you cannot help liking his dear children."

"If you mean that I am going to like that beastly little niece, you're fine and mistook, Mr. Lawyer," said Daisy. "I think you are a horrid man, and I believe, I really do, that you forged that will."

"Good-bye, girls, and don't be silly," said Debenham.

He said to himself as he took his seat in his motor-car: "Poor O'Brien, I thought his troubles were ended; but I really do not think I ever saw a more unpleasant pair of girls than the Mostyns. Their mother over again, only worse. Thank goodness, I've saved O'Brien from making a fool of himself. That

saintly sort of person often does that kind of thing. That poor, dear, brave little girl, I'm afraid, will have an awful time when the Mostyns go to Templemore. Why, the face of the one they call Daisy is as sly and as full of mischief as a monkey's."

CHAPTER VIII.

SUMMER WITH AN EAST WIND.

THE Rector had given directions that Templemore was to be re-painted and re-papered and to a certain extent re-furnished for his return. He was expected home on the first of June, that day of all days, when spring has not quite died away and summer has touched everything with her golden wings. Maureen and Colonel Herbert met the travellers when they entered the old house, and Maureen flung her arms round Uncle Pat's neck and kissed him over and over again. She kissed Dominic, too, but she was mostly taken up with Uncle Pat.

"Why, you look quite well; I do declare, you look young," said Maureen.

"And you, my dearest baby," replied the Rector, "I never saw you look better before."

"Oh, that's all owing to 'dear Colonel,'" said Maureen. "He is a darling. He doesn't much like my leaving him, but you come first, dearest, most dear."

"Yes, I come first, little girl," said the Rector.

He glanced at the Colonel as he spoke, and saw a shadow on his brow and a curious blue look round

his lips, and it suddenly flashed upon the Rector that perhaps he was selfish in keeping Maureen; but he must keep her now, he felt he must. Was she not his twin-brother's only child, and was there not money enough now for everything? Money certainly was a power.

The Rector went up to the Colonel and began to thank him, but the Colonel interrupted him.

"None of that, dear old man. I'm the sort of person who cannot bear thanks from anyone; not even from her, blessed angel. By the way, I have bought her a horse—'Fly-away' by name. He's a thoroughbred Arab, and I have sent his own groom with him. It would give me sincere pleasure, Rector—unspeakable pleasure—if you would let me pay all the expense of Fly-away and groom."

The Rector paused before he replied; then he said slowly, "It shall be as you wish."

"I'll ride over to-morrow," said the Colonel, "and take Maureen for a scamper across country. Oh, by the way, she has got a nice little pipe of her own—not developed, of course—but it will be something very good, by-and-by. She sings at present as the birds sing, and you will find my present to her in the shape of a Blüthner grand in your drawing-room. Now I will say good-bye.—Maureen, acushla, one kiss. I'm coming back to-morrow."

"Yes, 'dear Colonel,' yes," said Maureen, and she pressed the withered cheek several times with her rosy lips, and the Colonel went away, a sadly

broken-down man, although he had made such tremendous efforts to show nothing.

"Why, Maureen, my blessing," said the Rector, "you have won Colonel Herbert's heart. He's a right good, gentlemanly fellow, one of the best in the county. Everyone has hitherto supposed that his heart was made of iron, but you—you have changed all that."

"No, it isn't me; it is his dear self," said the child, "and he hasn't a heart of iron, my Colonel, but a soft heart, very gentle. I think I love him next best to you and Dominic out of all the world. He has been so good to me while you were away. But now let's be happy. Oh, hurrah! This is a good world. Dear old Templemore! Come for a walk, Uncle Pat.—Come along, too, Dom.—We must see the fruit garden and the place where the periwinkles will soon be in full blossom. They are in bud now, but soon they'll be in blossom. Oh, what wonderful, amazing things have happened during this past year! God has given you back your life, my darling."

"Yes, Maureen," said the Rector, "and to see you, my little blessing, looking as you do, is the crowning touch to my bliss."

"I wish Kitty and Denis were here," said Maureen.

"They are coming in a week's time," replied the Rector; "and in about ten days from now their step-sisters will arrive."

"Oh," said Maureen, "the girls that step-auntie was always talking about?"

"Yes, the same. They are pretty much about your age, Maureen—a little older if anything. I have not seen them yet."

"We must be very good to them," said Maureen.

"Yes, acushla, yes. What a big family we'll be, with all you young ones trotting about, and the Colonel and I—a pair of old fogies, bedad!—watching you at your games."

"Indeed, no; nothing of that sort," said Maureen. "You'll join in our games, for you are quite young again, and my Colonel isn't old. I have taught him to play hide-and-seek, and he loves it. There is nothing like play to keep people young. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Pegeen joined in some fine morning. She is the only really old person in the house. But now, Uncle, please tell me all about step-auntie's girls."

"I can't tell you anything, darling, for I have not seen them. Even when, long ago—at least, it is five years ago now—when I asked their poor mother to marry me, the girls were at school, and she never would allow them to come home for the holidays. I disapproved, but now all that is changed, for I am their guardian as well as their step-father."

"I wonder if they'll be nice," said Maureen. "We ought to give them a very pretty bedroom, Uncle Pat."

"I thought their poor mother's room—it is the

best in the house and the best furnished; and you can make it look very charming for them by the time they arrive, Maureen."

"You may be certain sure of that," said Maureen, and she clasped her little hands tightly and looked with her loving eyes full at Uncle Pat.

The Colonel arrived the next day and took Maureen for a long ride on Fly-away, and then Maureen insisted on his staying to dinner, which she had herself prepared with the help of Pegeen, who of course worshipped the "swate asthore."

Afterwards Maureen sang several old Irish songs, and a boy and two men listened and wondered. How gay and true and clear was that voice. The Colonel could not help sighing as he got up to go back to his solitary home.

"If *only* I had a child of my own," he thought, but he kept his thoughts to himself.

The weather was as fine this year as it had been last, and Denis and Kitty arrived all in due course, perfectly wild with rapture and enthusiasm. Then one day, quite unexpectedly, an outside car of the very shabbiest make was seen trundling down the avenue. From the car leaped a girl with flaxen hair and another girl with red hair, and the girl with flaxen hair flew at Uncle Pat and flung her arms round his neck and said, "Why, dad, dad, dear old dad! It is good to see you. Let's have a good hug. I'm Daisy, you know—called Dysy when I'm naughty—and this here is Henny-penny."

The girl with red hair was not as demonstrative as the flaxen-haired Daisy; her eyes had a cruel look in them, and her mouth was loose and ugly.

"I'm Henrietta Mostyn," she said. "I suppose you are my step-father."

"Yes, my dear; welcome to Templemore."

"What a rum old place," said Henrietta.

"Oh, we all love it very much, dear," said the Rector; "and I hope you'll both be good and happy while you are with us."

"Who is that boy?" asked Henrietta. "Quite a nice boy. What's his name?"

"I'm Dominic," replied Dominic O'Brien.

"Oh, are you? Well, you can take me round presently, if you like. There are lots of others, aren't there? Of course, I know that poor mumsie is dead and gone——"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, keep cheerful, Henny!"

"That's what I'm trying to do. Will someone pay the driver; I have no money."

"I'll see to it," said Dominic, going into the hall.

"Why, there is another boy!" cried Daisy. "What's your name, scamp?"

"It's not Scamp," said Denis O'Brien, who, although he was much younger than Dominic, had a good deal of Irish pride packed away in his eleven years of life. "My name is Denis O'Brien."

"Well, well, don't be huffy, kid. Whoever is that little sprite over there? A mite of a thing—a sort of changeling!"

Daisy's mocking finger pointed to pretty Kitty, who burst into floods of terrified tears and rushed to Maureen for comfort.

"Oh, come, Daisy, you must not speak of my youngest child in that tone," said the Rector. "She is my sweet little Kitty, and the dearest little pet."

"And whoever is that rag of a girl?"

"This is Maureen."

"Well," said Daisy, "wasn't mother right? Don't you remember, Henny-penny, how she used to write us pages about the detestable Maureen, and here she is in the flesh, as stuck-up as you please, and in all those fine feathers, too. I can give a shrewd guess as to whose money paid for those!"

There was a solemn silence in the great hall, then the Rector laid one strong, firm hand on Daisy's shoulder and the other on Henrietta's.

"My dears," he said, "you are strangers to us, but we wish, if possible, to be good to you. It is our intention, if possible, to be good, but you must not speak against any of my family, and in especial you must not speak against Maureen. She is the joy of my life and my greatest earthly comfort. Remember, girls, I am now in the position of your step-father and your guardian and can do with you just what I please.—Maureen, darling, take the girls up to their bedroom, and see that they have every comfort.—We shall have tea in the hall in about half an hour, and then the Colonel will come to take Maureen for her customary ride."

There was something very stern and solemn in the Rector's words, and even Daisy was subdued for the moment.

Maureen, who had not shed a tear or shown a scrap of apparent emotion, now came forward and gravely without any smile said in her distinct, sweet voice: "Shall I take you to your room?—Kitty, dear, go and have a ride on daddy's shoulder."

"He's my daddy as well as the sprite's!" cried out the irrepressible Daisy. "That's one comfort. Well, I suppose we may as well go with you, interloper." The last word she dropped as she did not wish her step-father to hear her.

Maureen had taken great pains with the late Mrs. O'Brien's room. She had taken away the large double bed and had substituted two little oak bedsteads, and the room was really quite charming, with its good furniture, its flowers, and wide-open windows, which let in the delicious air, that blew straight from the Atlantic, not two miles away.

"How shivering—how bitter!" cried Daisy. "For goodness' sake, shut that window; I'll catch my death—I know I shall. What a great empty room! Nothing in it to speak of. The only decent person I have seen since I entered the house is the boy they call Dominic. I am going to have a try and flirt with him. It will get my hand in for proper practice by-and-by."

"You mustn't be unkind to me if you expect Dominic to like you," said Maureen.

"Oh, so that's the way the wind blows! Ho-ho! Well, little figure of fun, and how do you enjoy your stolen goods?"

"I don't understand you; I haven't a notion what you mean," said poor little Maureen.

"Don't begin by teasing her," suddenly exclaimed Henrietta; "we'll have plenty of opportunity later on. You know we made our plans, but you are such an air-bubble. '*Dysy—Dysy—give me your answer, do!*'"

"I'll scratch your cheeks if you talk to me like that," exclaimed Daisy. "I'm not going to be afraid of anybody, and I say it plainly and frankly. Dad's an old frump, but it's wisest to make up to him. What did mother see in him to marry him? As to this creature, she is unspeakable, but of course stolen goods! Well, miss, what are you staring at us for?"

"I thought perhaps I might help you," said Maureen, in her sweet voice, which, in spite of every effort, had a sort of tremble in it. "I don't know that I can; but I thought I could. I'd like to, awfully!"

"Oh, humbug, shut up!" said Henny-penny.

"You'd like me to leave you perhaps," said Maureen. "There's hot water there, and when the bell rings for tea, or rather when the gong sounds, I can come up and fetch you. We thought you'd like this room. Pegeen and I took great pains preparing it for you. It is quite the best bedroom in the house, and the largest. Uncle Pat ought to have it

by right, but he wouldn't take it from you, for step-auntie always slept in it, and we thought you'd be sure to like her room, seeing that you are her children. The bed has been moved and two small beds put in. I think myself it is a beautiful room," continued Maureen.

She turned as she spoke in her graceful way and walked towards the door, but before she could reach it both girls had sprung upon her.

"How old are you?"

"I shall be fifteen in a few months. Please don't clutch my shoulders so tightly."

"Well, you're very little younger than we are. We're twins and we're fifteen. We won't be sixteen till Christmas, so there isn't a year between us. We can have a fair fight."

"Now, look here, little monster," said Henny-penny. "Don't you think you are going to have your way in *this* house, which belonged to *our* mother."

"Please," said Maureen, "it belongs to Uncle Pat. It is the Rectory, you know."

"Take that," said Daisy, and she gave her a resounding smack upon her cheek.

"Now, look here, Miss Interloper," said Henny. —"Daisy, for goodness' sake, don't strike the creature—we mean to be top dogs at Templemore. We mean to get round dad and Dominic and a man you call Colonel, and you'll have no chance whatsoever; and if you think for an instant that we are going to

sleep in this room where mumsie slept until the day she was killed, you're finely mistaken, that's all. You want to kill us; that's about the truth."

"Oh, you don't understand," said poor Maureen.

"If I'm forced to sleep in this room, I shall shriek and yell all night long," said Daisy.

"No, you won't, Daisy, for of course you won't sleep in the room. Why, we should have mumsie walking over us all night long—a pretty trick for you to play on us, Miss Humbug; but you'll soon know your own place. We haven't come to this home of desolation for nothing."

"Where's father?" cried Daisy. "Oh, there he is walking with Dominic. Dad, I say, dad, come upstairs at once! Dominic may come, too, if he likes. The little scamp has been playing tricks on us. Come quick, father, come quick, and save your poor children."

The amazed Rector, accompanied by Dominic, entered the room. The first thing Dominic saw was a great red mark on Maureen's cheek. He went up to her and slipped his hand through her arm.

"Who has been hurting you, acushla?" he said, speaking in that loving Irish voice, which few girls can withstand.

"I tell you what," said Henny.—"Daisy, for Heaven's sake, keep quiet.—That creature put us into this room because she wanted to frighten us out of the world. Why, this was mumsie's room. Please, father, order another room to be got ready for us."

"Certainly, my dears. I shall be only too pleased to take possession of this room myself, and you and your sister can sleep in my room. It is a storey higher up, but the beds can be moved.—Maureen, can you give orders, dear? Why, whatever has happened to your cheek, darling?"

"I suppose I'm a bit flushed," said Maureen.

"Nothing of the sort. Out with the truth," said Daisy. "I smacked her for her cruelty."

"You did *that!*" said the Rector of Templemore. —"Maureen, my darling, go to your room and lie down. Dominic, take her there, and take every possible care of her.—Now, girls," continued the Rector, when Dominic and Maureen had gone away together, "if you attempt to persecute my little niece or make her life at all miserable I put down my foot, and I think, all things considered, that you will find it a very firm one. Our wish was to make you happy at Templemore, but if you choose to be miserable over nothing at all, and to go on in the exceedingly unpleasant way you have done since you entered the house, why, there is an old lady I know who will take charge of you. I won't tell you her name. I won't tell you anything about her except that she is a relation of my own; and I rather fancy, Henrietta and Daisy, that if you go and live with her, you will sleep where *she* chooses, you will eat what *she* puts before you, you will obey her to the letter, and you will not have an easy time. You need not unpack, now, girls. You have shown since you came to this

house want of heart and want of feeling, and I may as well tell you that I am bitterly ashamed of you."

Whereupon the Rector left the beautiful bedroom, and the girls stood and stared at each other.

"We're in prison," said Daisy, and she began to sob.

"Nothing of the sort, if we play our cards properly," returned her sister. "Now I'm going to tidy up a bit, and you'd best do the same, and, for goodness, gracious' sake, don't say a word against that little brat in the company of her elders. We can tease her fine in private, and she has got some grit in her, I must say, for she didn't tell when you gave her that awful blow, Daisy. You did yourself no good by that. I wouldn't sleep in this room; I'm with you there. Poor mumsie's room; but I think we'll have to change our tactics a little, otherwise we'll be packed off to that truly awful woman father has described to us. He's not at all a nice man, but Dominic is worth cultivating, and then there's the Colonel. I own I should like to get into his good graces, so do brush out my hair and let me look pretty, and I'll do the same for you. Afterwards we can find our way to the hall hand in hand, two forlorn, sad little orphans—enough to touch the heart of anyone."

Daisy submitted, as she always did, to the stronger nature, and the girls entered the hall a quarter of an hour later in their somewhat tawdry travelling dresses, much the worse for wear—one with her head

of fiery red hair and her eyes of fiery blue, the other a sort of shadow of her sister with no colour in the hair, nor in the small pinched face.

The Colonel was seated as usual in the hall, and the Rector was speaking to him on all kinds of subjects, learned subjects and subjects of the day.

Dominic, Denis, and Kitty had placed themselves as far as possible from the Mostyns. Presently there was a little rush heard on the richly-carpeted stairs, and a girl, a beautiful girl, in a Lincoln-green habit, with her little peaked cap of velvet to match with its heron's feather, dashed into the middle of the group. As she advanced, she sang, and the song she sang was "When Malachi Wore His Collar of Gold," and she flew to the Colonel and put her soft arms round his neck and gave him one very light kiss on his forehead.

"Why, Maureen, my blessing!" exclaimed Colonel Herbert.

"You'd best pour out tea now, Maureen," said her uncle, "or you and the Colonel will be late for your ride."

CHAPTER IX.

STEP-DAUGHTERS.

"You look tired, Maureen," said Henrietta, coming forward at that moment, "and as *I'm* father's child, perhaps he would like me to pour out tea."

Maureen turned very red, but did not speak a word; she sat down quietly on a seat near Colonel Herbert. He looked at the child with unspeakable love and anxiety in his eyes. By-and-by, to Maureen's great rejoicing, she and the Colonel went off for their ride together.

The moment the Rector found himself alone with his step-daughters, for the two boys and Kitty had fled from the hall, Henrietta went and knelt down by the elderly man's side.

"Are you vexed with me, father dear?"

"I am, Henrietta, decidedly vexed. You have no right to take Maureen's place in this house. I did not wish to make a fuss before Colonel Herbert, but clearly understand that Maureen has the management of things at Templemore."

"But I am your child, daddy, and older, too," said Henrietta.

"And so am I, daddy, dad. We are twins, of

course, so we are the same age," said Daisy, "and we are older than Maureen by a few months."

"Yes, I know all that," said the Rector.

"Well, you see, it's like this," proceeded Henrietta. "It was quite bad enough to be robbed. Darling father—for you do look a dear old duck—we are not blaming you one little bit, you couldn't help yourself; but mumsie, had she lived, meant all her money to go to Daisy and me. Well, she died, poor dear, so there was an end to that. She was a bit mad when she made that will, but we must put up with it. It's there, and the lawyers say it cannot be changed; only really and truly, father dear, Daisy and I, as your step-daughters, and as mumsie's own children, ought to be heads of everything in this house. We want to order the servants. Maureen can do rough work, of course, if we like to give it to her, but she must do it under our superintendence; don't you think so, Daisy?"

"Certain sure, Henny-penny."

"So you see, father dear," continued Henrietta, fixing the Rector with her fierce bright eyes, "it's better to begin at once. That's why I spoke as I did just now, and why I took possession of the tea-urn."

"And gave me," said the Rector, "quite the most nauseous cup of tea I ever had at Templemore."

"Oh, you are prejudiced, daddy dear," said Daisy. "It was delicious tea. Henny is famed for her tea; but never mind, you shall teach Henny, and she shall give it to you just as you like—only the main point

is this: Is not Maureen to understand clearly and at once, that she is under us in this establishment?"

"No," said the Rector, "it cannot be."

"But it is very queer of you, daddy"—sob-sob came from Daisy's lips. "Here are we, your own darling wife's only children, treated anyhow, and that little scamp put on top of us. I don't think we can stand it."

"I don't think you can, Daisy. I think I must give immediate directions to have you and your sister sent to my cousin. She'll manage you if I can't. And now, my dears, although I'm better, I'm not the strongest of the strong, so I must ask you both kindly to leave me."

"But we won't go to that awful cousin of yours. We ought to be heads of this establishment; it's very cruel, that's what I call it. Our money gone, and our mother gone, and we thought nothing of at all. If you were anything of a gentleman, father, you wouldn't have taken us from that nice school that mumsie chose for us, where we had lots and lots of friends."

"My dears," said the Rector, and he laid his hand as gently as he could on Henrietta's shoulder and looked into those fierce eyes so like his poor wife's, and noticed the cloud of red-gold hair; and then he glanced from her to Daisy, who was winking at her sister, and altogether putting on a most disagreeable appearance. "My dears," he said, "God help me—

I'm a weak man. I have suffered sorely, and your mother's money is no pleasure to me."

"Oh, don't talk tommy-rot," said Daisy. "If it is no pleasure to you, you can give it back to us."

"There is such a thing as the law of the land, girls, and by that law, the money your mother left behind her can only be spent according to the one will she made. I wish for many reasons it could have been otherwise. I will tell you one thing, my dears: I did not even know of the existence of the will until the very day your poor mother leapt from the dog-cart and broke her neck."

"She must have looked very queer with her neck broken," said Daisy. "Did you see her, father? Was it twisted round or doubled over, or what?"

"Daisy, I refuse to answer any more of your heartless questions. Go away now and leave me in peace. I am feeling terribly tired and upset. But clearly understand, both of you girls, that for the present you are only *guests* in this establishment, and that Maureen keeps her old place. Now, go!"

"Well, he is a frump," said Daisy to her sister.

She uttered these words after she had left the hall.

"If you had gone out, Daisy, and left him to me, I would have managed him fine. I'm the sort of girl that can come round any man. But you—you are just contemptible. I'll get the upper hand of Miss Maureen yet, but I'll manage it in my own way. You can back me, of course, if you like."

"You may be sure I'll do that, Henny! I couldn't

live but for you, but I do get so passionately angry when I think of the way we have been treated. Just to think of that little whipper-snapper having a horse of her own and a Colonel to ride with her, and she put before everyone and getting as much money as we shall have. Oh, I call it detestable!"

"Well, you heard what father said—that the will can't be changed," said Henrietta. "Let's go now and visit the kitchens and scold the servants. They at least shall imagine we are mistresses."

"Oh, what larks!" said Daisy. "Come along, Henny; you are just splendid."

There were a good many servants seated at tea in the old kitchen, for Mr. O'Brien, owing to his added wealth, had increased his staff. They were all Irish Mollies, Bridgets, and Norahs, in addition to which there was the old butler Burke, who sat at one end of the long table, while Pegeen occupied the place of honour at the other. This goodly group of men and maids—for several of the gardeners had come in without permission for their meals—were talking in the soft, low-pitched voice of the Irish. They were drinking tea, too, according to the invariable fashion, out of saucers, their elbows resting on the table-cloth, which was by no means too clean.

"Lawk-a-massy," one of the men was saying to Norah, the under-housemaid, "why, what Mr. Burke has been a-telling to me fair takes my breath entirely. It seems to grip me like. That young minx taking our Miss Maureen's place and slopping out the tea,

half into the saucer and half into the cup; and Miss Maureen, the angel that she is, not a word out of her, but just setting down near the Colonel, blessed man, and taking her tea, as though it was nice, although the left cheek of the poor lamb was all swelled up; wasn't it, Burke?"

"It was that so," replied Burke, "and fiery red for that matter."

"And herself such a pale little colleen," said Norah. "My word, one of 'em must have riz a hand at her."

All this time Pegeen had not uttered a word, but her sunken black eyes looked very black indeed, and her breath came in short, quick puffs from her almost toothless mouth.

It was upon this scene that the Misses Mostyn burst in.

"Hullo, hullo, you good people!" said Daisy.

"Hold your tongue, Daisy, and let me speak," interrupted Henrietta.

But here Pegeen rose to her feet, the rest immediately following her example.

"I'll thank ye, madames, to walk out of my kitchen. Ye are not welcome here, and that's flat."

"Oh, dear, dear, what horrid people you all are!" exclaimed Daisy. "We poor orphan girls can't go anywhere to get a bit of welcome."

"To be sure now," said Pegeen, "and there is much of the grief of the orphan about yez. I niver did see it, niver, displayed so touchin' like. Ye are

your mother over again, and she war a bad 'un if ever there was a bad 'un. What call had ye, I'd like to know, to go and push yourself into Miss Maureen's place—her little darling self that is the angel of the world? Yes, yez did that; and, what's more, one or other of ye, I can't say which, sthruck her across the left cheek. What call had ye to go on like that, and then come prying in on us? Get out of the way, that's what I say—quick!”

“Please,” said Henrietta, who thought it best to be as polite as she knew how, for all the servants were glaring at her as though they would tear her in pieces. “Please let me speak and then I'll go, but I'll take good care to tell the master—my father—what a disgraceful scene I have lighted on. I don't believe for one moment those men have any right to be in the kitchen, and—why, I do declare that is peach jam you are eating, and new-laid eggs. I'm the head of the house in future, so you'd better accept the fact. But now, what I wish to know is this: When is Miss Daisy's and my room to be changed?”

“Sakes alive—ye have got a fine bedroom! Haven't ye tuk to it?”

“We were taken to a room where my mother slept until she died. Do you think we would put up with a haunted room?”

“I did hear the banshee two nights ago,” said Norah. “She was crying at one of the windows. It was a sure sign of another death.”

“And you expect us to sleep there,” said Henri-

etta. "That's likely. However, the matter is settled, and whoever is the housemaid—I'm sure I don't know how many there are—dozens, I should say—but anyway the housemaids, as soon as they have finished their peach jam and new-laid eggs, are to go upstairs and put our beds into father's room, and father will sleep in the haunted room. He has given orders to that effect, and if you don't believe me, impertinent Irish savages, you'd better go and ask him."

"My word, I will that," said Norah.

"And so will I," said Bridget.

"And so will I," cried Molly. "It will be a nice change for the masther, for his room is mighty poor and what you might call rickety, whilst 'herself' had what was the best room in the house. I'm right glad ye heard the banshee, Norah, for now the poor dear masther will have a dacent room to sleep in; and as like as not, for that matter, the banshee'll cry at the window of the room ye'll be sleeping in, misses. It's *ye* she's after—the same as your poor mother. Oh, my word, we must bustle to."

"Finish your tay," said Pegeen; "and, young ladies—what calls theirselves such—*lave the kitchen!*"

CHAPTER X.

AT TEMPLEMORE.

THE girls did not find themselves thoroughly comfortable at Templemore. The room upstairs was small. It faced north, and the furniture was shabby. In vain they demanded better furniture. No notice was taken of their request. What the Rector had endured for years without uttering a word they must endure now by their own choice and desire. The Rector's illness had been greatly brought on by his unsuitable bedroom.

Maureen poured out tea, Maureen coaxed the servants into a good humour, Maureen picked flowers, and with the help of Pegeen arranged the *menu* for the kitchen and also for the hall, where they generally partook of refreshments in the hot weather. Maureen was growing very tall and very slim, and the ugly red glow had faded from her cheek. Nevertheless, she had her trials. Henrietta and Daisy saw that as they could not work openly, they must work by guile. She might still be the pretended head of the establishment, but they could make her unhappy. They managed this by many clever dodges.

On a certain night when the Mostyns had been at

Templemore for a few days, the Colonel came to dine. There was an excellent meal planned by Maureen, and the family and visitor alike were waited on by old Burke, and a smart-looking girl, who called herself by the uncommon name of Vivian. She was the head-parlourmaid, and being truly Irish by birth, was accepted by Burke as worth training. When the dinner had come to an end, the Mostyns, who were wearing bright pale blue gauzy frocks (they had refused to put on any sort of mourning for their mother), and Maureen, who was in simple white, with a green bow, the true Irish green, in her soft brown hair, were standing together in the drawing-room.

The Mostyns had not made any way whatever with the Colonel, and, although the Rector was kind to them, it was a distant sort of kindness with no love in it. He had begged them on their arrival to wear black for their mother, but as they positively refused to do anything of the sort, he did not press the point.

Denis and Kitty had both retired to bed; Dominic, the one person whom the girls could endure in the family, was nowhere to be seen; but Maureen was there, looking exquisite and fair, with her pale, creamy complexion, her dark brows and soft brown eyes to match her hair—Maureen, the interloper.

“Do you know,” said Henrietta suddenly, “that you are a robber?”

“Please, Henrietta, don’t talk like that,” said Maureen.

"Let her alone," cried Daisy; "if we don't she'll begin to cry, and we have our fun prepared upstairs to-night."

"Whisper, whisper." The other girl nodded, and a pleased expression came over her face.

"I say, what larks!" she exclaimed. Then she said suddenly: "What a glorious piano. When did mumsie buy it?"

"Your mother didn't buy it," said Maureen. "It was Colonel Herbert who bought it and gave it to me."

"That's another of your lies," said Daisy. "All right; let's see what it sounds like."

She could hardly play a note of music, but she could pound wrong notes and crashing chords to any extent. Henrietta stood by her, smiling.

"Now," said Henrietta, "you shall play my accompaniments. I have a great voice."

She set to work with great fervour, Daisy improvising the accompaniment. Her song was one just then very much in vogue: "Cheer Up; Never Say Die!" The partly cracked, untrue voice, the hopeless accompaniment, brought the gentlemen, who were all musical, out of the dining-room.

"Good heavens!" said Colonel Herbert. "Maureen's piano will be broken if that sort of thing goes on."

They entered the room long before they were expected. The Colonel said with extreme politeness to the two Mostyns: "Thank you for your perform-

ance. Now may we have the pleasure of a song from Maureen."

Maureen immediately sat down and sang the songs "dear Colonel" loved best. Her voice was gaining in power and richness every day. Dominic stood by and turned the pages for her, but suddenly a burst of giggling in a distant part of the room caused him to leave his place. He went up to the two girls, who were choking and stuffing their handkerchiefs into their mouths.

"If you wish to laugh, will you go outside," he said. "We want to listen to Maureen."

"You come along with us, Dommy, boy," said Daisy.

"Thanks; but I would not lose the pleasure of Maureen's singing for the world."

"You call *that* singing?" said Henrietta. "I call it the squealing of a cat."

"Thanks. You will perhaps allow me to retain my opinion. Don't laugh again when something beautiful is being done."

Maureen was singing "Those Evening Bells" when he went back to her. Her eyes were wonderfully soft and bright, and the Colonel patted her on the shoulder and kissed her on the cheek when he went away.

"We'll have a long ride to-morrow, girleen," he said. "You and I and Fergus and Fly-away. I'll call for you early, for I want to go a good long way; and, oh, by the way, Rector, may Maureen dine with

me at Rathclaren to-morrow night? I can send the horse back by the groom, and will bring the child back in my motor-car in time for bed."

"Certainly. You would like that, Maureen," said the Rector.

"Oh, yes," said the little girl. "I should love it."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GRAND BLÜTHNER.

THERE was a strange feeling over the old house, a feeling which had never pervaded it even in the unhappy days of the late Mrs. O'Brien. To all appearance, it was Maureen who was the cause of the misery. It was not that she ever complained, but that she looked fagged and lifeless. She locked her piano, the beautiful Blüthner. She could not stand Daisy's crashing chords and Henrietta's false notes. The two Mostyn girls went one day, when Maureen was out, on purpose to open this instrument in order to indulge in long squeals on it, and in short to injure it as much as possible. They hated the piano because it belonged to Maureen. They could not accuse her of robbery in connection with it, for Colonel Herbert had given it to her.

Mr. O'Brien was busy over his parochial work, and the girls thought they would have a fine time. They had dragged Denis and little Kitty into the room, and, wild with mischievous excitement, they proposed a dance.

"I'll play the music," said Daisy. "I'm the musical one; and Henny-penny, you can hop round with

Denis. He's just about better than nobody, and that's about all I can say for him. Wherever is Dominic, I wonder? I say, Kitty—oh, don't look so frightened, you little goose!—where is your eldest brother? Where's the one respectable member of the family?"

"Dominic—has gone—away—with Colonel Herbert—and Maureen," faltered Kitty. "Colonel Herbert brought his motor car—and the three went away together. I—I don't want—to *dance*, please—'sides, I couldn't, as the pianner is locked."

"Locked, you little brat, you little imp! What on earth do you mean?"

"Please, I'm going out," said Kitty.

"You don't go out until you tell us the truth."

"'Pon my word, she's right."

Henrietta struggled with all her might to open the instrument; but the lock was good—in fact, a double one—and the great piano stood in its solitary splendour completely shut away from mischievous fingers.

"Well, this is more than I *can* stand," said Henrietta. "Look here, Denis, you'll be a man some day, and a right handsome one, too—fetching, you know."

"Whatever's fetching?" asked Denis.

"Oh, the sort of boy that lures the birds from the hedges, with those dark grey eyes of yours and the curly black lashes. Oh, I say, you *are* a wonder. You'll catch the girls by handfuls!"

"Don't know, and don't care!" said Denis. "I hate girls—that is, except Maureen and Kitty!"

"Well, I never! You are a nice sort of lad," said

Daisy. "I've thought of a plan, though. You don't know where she has put the key?"

"No, I don't," said the boy sturdily; "and if I did I wouldn't tell."

"Well, get away as fast as you can, with that little brat of a sister of yours."

The two children only too eagerly left the room.

"Henny," said Daisy, the minute they were alone, "are you going to stand this sort of thing?"

"I don't see how we are going to do anything else. It is most detestable," said Henrietta. "But if the piano is locked, we can't do anything with it, can we?"

"I have my thoughts, and they are very fine ones," said Daisy. "Will you listen to me, Henrietta?"

"Oh, I'm sick of everything," said Henrietta, and she put her arms down on the lovely instrument and began to cry loudly and bitterly.

"Look here, Henny, do shut up. Let's dance a jig on the top of the piano. We've got our outdoor shoes on and they are covered with mud. That little wretch is so particular about the top of her piano—always dusting it and polishing it; and then, I say, can't we go to her room and search for the key?"

Henny was not one long to endure hopeless grief. The next moment she had jumped on the top of the piano, and, encircling Daisy in her arms, proceeded to do the one thing she could do fairly decently—that was the steps of a Scotch reel. She whistled the tune with her full rosy lips, and the two girls danced

faster and faster until, suddenly going too near the narrow part of the instrument, they both fell over with a resounding crash.

Just at that moment Burke solemnly opened the drawing-room door and announced the Honourable Mrs. Leach and Miss Leach. Now it so happened that this Mrs. Leach was a friend in a sort of way of the second Mrs. O'Brien. She therefore thought it her duty to call on the poor lady's daughters, although her own daughter Kathleen by no means approved of the idea.

The sight that met their eyes was decidedly startling: Two girls prone on the floor, and the top of the piano hopelessly injured by clumsy boots and covered from end to end with mud; but Daisy, quick as lightning, saved the situation. Henrietta felt slightly stunned, but Daisy always kept her composure.

"We're so glad to see you, Mrs. Leach," she said. "Darling mumsie wrote so often about you, and said you were quite *cheearming*. We are glad to see you—we poor lone orphans. And what a pretty daughter you have got, Mrs. Leach. What's her name—Sally or Patty, or what?"

"My name is Kathleen," said that young lady, in a very stiff voice.

"I hope you are not hurt, Miss Mostyn," said Mrs. Leach, going up to Henrietta. "What an awful mess that lovely piano is in! Is it possible that you were dancing on the top? How terribly vexed little Maureen will be!"

"Well, she locked it, spiteful cat," said Henrietta, "so we thought we would pay her out. We are two lone orphans. You'll stay and have tea with us, won't you, Mrs. Leach; mumsie-pumsie's friend—you will, won't you now? I'll ring and tell Burke to get tea at once."

"No, I'm greatly afraid I cannot stay," said Mrs. Leach. "I have several other calls to make."

"Then have you only come to tantalise us like?" said Daisy. "You come in—mumsie's friend—you and your beauty of a daughter—why, I could hug her this minute—and I *will*, too. I never can restrain myself when I get a passionate fit on. Oh, please stay, do; we are such lone orphans."

Kathleen stood up. She was very tall and graceful. She was one of the most beautiful girls in the neighbourhood. She was more than a head taller than Daisy.

"Mother, we must go," she said. "I always told you that what you have done to-day was a mistake. No, we cannot possibly stay. Miss Mostyn, forgive me, I never kiss strangers. May I ring to have our carriage brought round?"

But Burke at that moment was standing at the door.

"Is it t^yay ye'll be requiring for the ladies?" he inquired of Henrietta.

"No, thank you, Burke," said Mrs. Leach. "We cannot possibly stay to tea. Good-bye, Miss Mostyn. Good-bye, Miss Daisy. For your mother's

sake"—she paused and seemed to swallow something in her throat—"for her sake, I intended to be kind, but it is impossible; you are hopeless. We only make friends with our own sort."

"Give my love to Maureen and sweet little Kitty," said Kathleen. "Come, mother darling, or we'll be late for Colonel Herbert's tea-party."

They swept out of the dismantled drawing-room with all those airs of women of the world which they truly possessed. As Burke was conducting them to their carriage, he could not help saying:

"Ah, thin, it's the truth I'm telling y'ladyship. The things that be going on now are past bearing—past bearing; and I'm frightened out of my very life for Miss Maureen and Miss Kitty."

"Well, Burke, you must do your best to protect them," said Mrs. Leach. "I quite feel with you; but you must know that it is impossible for us to associate with such girls."

"It's the truth ye are saying, ma'am. Why, their ma—goodness knows she was bad enough—but she was a beauty compared to thim as she has left ahint her. Oh, Heaven presarve us, they're listening. That's one of their ways. It's my heart that's broke entirely. Good-bye, ma'am; good-bye, Miss Kathleen. May the God above bless ye both."

The old servant stood bareheaded on the steps of the ancient house and the handsome carriage of the Leaches rolled down the avenue. Then Burke stepped softly back on his way to the kitchen premises. There

was no sound audible anywhere, and he sincerely hoped that he was mistaken in supposing that Miss Daisy had been listening to him. But he was not. Daisy had listened—Daisy had overheard, and had now come back to her sister.

“We must do something,” she said, and she ground her little uneven teeth and spite flashed out of her small eyes.

“What’s to be done?” said Henrietta. “It is you who make the mischief, Daisy. You have no reticence of any sort. I’m sure dear mums didn’t keep us so many years at that expensive school without our at least learning that strange girls a great deal older than ourselves should not be kissed. If you had gone away quietly and tidied your mop of white hair, I would soon have got round Mrs. Leach; but I can do nothing when you are by—nothing at all.”

“Oh, do let us stop talking about the old horror,” said Daisy. “There’s one thing I’m determined on: Burke shall be turned away. I heard what he said of us. Disgraceful, I call it!”

“Well, father is the only one to turn him away,” said Henrietta. “My head aches. I got a very nasty fall.”

“Poor Henny-penny—poor old girl! We did damage the piano a good bit, that’s one comfort. Now, look here, suppose we go up to Maureen’s room and have a right good search for the key. She must have hidden it somewhere. There’s something very tiresome about Maureen. Whatever we do to her,

whatever we say, she only looks sad and pale and doesn't answer back. I detest that sort of little non-entity. *And* the petting she gets! And she living on poor mumsie's money! We must contrive to punish her in some way she'll feel."

"Well, anyhow," said Henrietta, "we will go and have a look for the key."

They soon found themselves in Maureen's room, which was a little dressing-room off Uncle Pat's, and which, although by no means grand, was exquisitely neat and tidy.

"Let's make hay while the sun shines," said Daisy. "Pull the bed to pieces and throw the bed-clothes on the floor. Now, then, let's look in her drawers. Locked, I do declare! What a mean spite of a thing! Henrietta, can't you contrive to kick over her water-jug and set the water rolling on the floor? That, I rather fancy, will put Miss Neatness out. Oh, dear—oh, dear! Why, whatever have we here?"

The girls converted the neat room into a hopeless, sopping mess, but now their eager eyes lighted on a little basket, which contained screw-drivers and tools of different descriptions. With these in their hands, they rushed downstairs again to the drawing-room, and began to use every endeavour to burst open the Blüthner grand. Try as they would, however, they could not succeed, for the double lock was too much for them. All they did do was to break two or three screw-drivers and injure the front of the piano. They even broke off little bits of its lovely, highly-

polished frame. They then returned the tools to Maureen's room and went out hand-in-hand into the open air. There they met Garry, the young groom, who was just bringing in Fly-away after his daily exercise.

They stopped immediately and entered into a very animated conversation, which obtained but small response.

"Couldn't we ride him, just for a bit?" said Daisy. "Turn about, you know. Maureen doesn't want him to-day, and it would be such fun. Do let us, Garry; do—do!"

"I won't, and that's flat," said Garry. "The horse ain't mine—he's Miss Maureen's. He has had his scamper, and now that he's dry and brushed down and cooled off a bit I'm going to give him his oats. The Colonel is that particular about him—white oats he allus gives him. They are a sight dearer than the others. He's a beautiful baste entirely. I wouldn't be tampering with him if I was you, misses; you must remember, though 'tain't for me to sphake, that it was The O'Shee kilt your mother and The O'Shee is nothing at all to Fly-away. Watch the fire in his eye. It wants a practised rider to manage himself, that it does. Ye'd best lave him alone. Ef you ride him, as sure as I'm standing here, ye'll get your deaths as 'herself' did afore ye."

"But please tell us," said Daisy, who could be very agreeable to any man when she liked, "you don't only give him those white oats? We don't

want to ride him. We are not a bit that sort; but we are interested. I suppose you don't mind telling us how you feed him, do you, Garry?"

"I knows my business, and as a rule I kapes it to meself," said Garry.

"But you'll tell it to us, won't you? There surely is no harm in that, Garry; and we are so fond of Maureen!"

"Are ye, now? Well, I wouldn't have guessed it; but there's no saying what's hid in the breast of a maid. I must be off now. I'm going to lock himself in, and ye'd best be making for the hall, for the Rector will be there, and as like as not will be wanting his tay—with Masther Dominic and Miss Maureen away."

"But do—do tell us what else you give him to eat," said Daisy.

"To ate—bless ye—he has his males reglar. A hot mash o' nights."

"Oh, a hot mash at night," said Henrietta.

"Yus, and why not. Yee are afther no good; but I have the charge o' Fly-away, and I don't say that the stable yard is the right place for little maids. Ye'll forgive me, misses, but it ain't, really it ain't."

The girls walked back slowly and thoughtfully to the house. They had never ridden in their lives, and were not at all anxious to risk their existence on the back of Fly-away. Rich as she was, Mrs. Mostyn, before she became Mrs. O'Brien, had placed her daughters in a very common school, and beyond

saying from time to time that she meant to leave them all her money and that they were dear, beautiful girls, she took little or no interest in them. She paid their school fees and their holiday fees, and did not bother about anything else. Her one great object was to keep Mostyn's daughters away from Patrick O'Brien, for she knew perfectly well that her second husband was a very different sort of person from her first. But now the girls were established at Templemore and were bent on mischief. They certainly could not break open the piano, but they might be able to injure the horse.

They conversed in low tones on that subject while they went arm in arm to the house, where Burke, according to custom, was laying a sumptuous tea in the hall. They felt certain they could accomplish it if they took their time over the matter. They did not absolutely want to *kill* him, but Daisy's idea was to mix something in his hot mash which poor unsuspecting Garry would give him without knowing anything about it. They felt they must be very careful how they set to work. The horse must be brought to the jaws of death, so that it would not be good for anything for a long time afterwards; and that horrid Garry would be dismissed. Oh, it was a jolly, jolly notion, and would pay off Miss Prunes and Prisms, which was their private name for Maureen.

In their father's library there would certainly be some medical books, and they could look up poisons

and—hurrah! of course they could buy some at the chemist's, and then Daisy, who was as lithe and slight as an eel, could creep through the windows and administer a sufficient amount of the dose mixed in with the hot mash.

This was their plan of plans. They were consequently in high spirits when they joined their step-father at tea.

CHAPTER XII.

POPSY-DAD.

THE girls, Henrietta and Daisy, were quite intent on their scheme. They were so intent that it kept them good in other respects. They apologised humbly for the injury done to the grand Blüthner. They were very penitent, and declared that it was just merely a lark, and hoped darling, dearest dad would forgive them.

The Reverend Mr. O'Brien could not help saying, after his first pause of astonishment: "The person who has to forgive you is Maureen."

"But why?" said Daisy, in an injured voice. "If you forgive your own little girls, popsy-dad, surely, most surely, no one else ought to be angry."

"It is Maureen's piano," replied the Rector. "You both did a naughty, mischievous—indeed, I may say a wicked thing. I am heartily ashamed of you; but Maureen has got such a glorious spirit of perfect gentleness and love that she *may* overlook your sin."

"I wish you wouldn't praise her quite so much," said Henrietta.

"I don't over-praise," said the Rector. "I think

of her as what she is. She comes of a noble stock. There never was anyone like her dear father, and her sweet young mother in her own way was equally blessed. They have long passed away from this troublesome world, but they have left their child behind them. You are more than fortunate girls to have such a companion, and to have the possibility of making such a friend. I don't say for a moment that you *will* make Maureen your friend. The matter rests with yourselves. She has the true spirit of forgiveness. No, don't touch the piano. You like to see it in its present horrible condition. I will sit in another room; for to me it is most repugnant. Amuse yourselves as you wish, girls. I am sorry I cannot feel very friendly to you at the present moment, but of course as I have said already, the matter rests in the hands of Maureen."

Certainly neither Henrietta nor Daisy felt comfortable at the Rector's words, and when late that evening Dominic and Maureen returned from Rathclaren, they both rushed out to her, Daisy whispering, "Now keep up your courage, Henny."

There was a standard lamp lighted in the drawing-room, and the ravages done to the Blüthner were very perceptible. Maureen, who had a happy colour in her cheeks and whose eyes were bright and soft, stared for a moment at the mangled instrument with a sort of horror. Mrs. Leach, who had joined the Colonel's tea-party, had not told the child what had happened; and Kathleen, who loved Maureen, had

walked about the grounds with her letting her cling to her arm and throwing all the interest of which she was capable into Maureen's account of her life.

"You know, Maureen, you ought to live here," said Kathleen at last.

But Maureen stared at her, and said with a voice of amazement: "What! and leave Uncle Pat?"

So Kathleen said no more. She felt afterwards that she could not.

Now the child stood in speechless despair, looking at her lovely instrument.

"Why, Daisy—why, Henrietta—what has happened?" she asked, and there was a choking sob in her voice. "Has one of the big farm sheep-dogs got in and walked about on the piano? Oh, it is more than that, for someone has been trying to break the lock! Oh, my darling piano—my soul of music——"

"Don't be affected, little brat!" said Daisy, who could flare up just like a match. Whatever else she would have said to the child was interrupted. Whether she would have accepted the theory of the sheep-dog and pretended that a burglar had tried to break the piano open can never be explained, for at that instant the Rector and Dominic entered the room.

Dominic had the steely blue eyes of his father—blue, with just a touch of grey in them—eyes which suddenly turned black at any emotion.

"Have you told Maureen the truth?" asked Mr. O'Brien.

"We—we were going to," said Daisy, "but she flew out with that horrid temper of hers, raving and roaring."

"That is not the way with Maureen. Now tell her the truth before me. Dominic, go and stand by your cousin."

Thus forced, the girls were obliged to say what had occurred. They described their rage when they found the piano locked, and how they had determined to dance a Scotch reel on the top. They confessed that their boots were very muddy, for they had been experimenting on the edge of a boggy piece of ground that morning.

"Now," said the Rector, when the ignominious tale had come to an end, "what do you wish to do, Maureen?"

The colour came slowly back to Maureen's face until it burned in her cheeks like two great spots.

"Dominic," she said, without taking the slightest notice of the girls, "we must not let such sheer ignorance trouble us. Go, like a darling to Pegeen, and get me some cloths and some Adams' polish. I daresay I can make the piano look fairly well until it is properly repolished, which 'dear Colonel' I know will get done for me."

"Then we needn't sit up, I suppose," said Henrietta, giving a profound yawn.

"Oh, no," said Maureen. "Oh, I'm very, very

sorry for you. You must have felt so bad afterwards. It is dreadful to feel *very* bad—afterwards. Good-night!”

There was a wonderful gracious sort of dignity about this little girl which subdued the Mostyns for the time being; but they were more than ever determined to punish her.

“She feels nothing; she hasn’t a scrap of heart,” said Daisy. “Think of her putting on those absurd airs. But *we’ll* touch her yet; I vow we will!”

“Yes, we will, we will—I declare we will!” exclaimed Henrietta. Soon they were lying in their oak bedsteads side by side, and talking in low whispers about how they could punish Maureen.

The next day passed much as usual. The little, half-French, half-Irish girl was very brave, and spent most of her time with Dominic. Her face was sadly pale, and she had a look about her eyes which frightened the boy because he could not understand it. “If she only *would* fly out in a rage,” he thought, “I could bear it better.”

The Colonel came as usual to take his little favourite for a ride, and during their ride the child made an unexpected request.

“I don’t want to make any complaint,” she began, “but I want the dear, darling Blüthner to go home to you for a time. We can hire a piano from Kingsala, and the Blüthner will be safer with you. It got a little injured yesterday, but I can’t tell you how, dear Colonel; only if you keep it I shall feel

happy, and when I come to you I can sing and play; and we can hire quite a good enough piano at Barry's on the Long Quay at Kingsala."

"There's something the matter with you, my blessing," said the Colonel.

"No, no, nothing at all; only I want to have the Blüthner safe."

Accordingly, a day or two later, a proper van was sent for the Blüthner, which once more found its place in the Colonel's beautiful drawing-room. Soon afterwards a man came and repaired the damage that had been done, and Maureen seemed happy once more; but she little knew what was awaiting her. A piano, the best which could be secured, an upright Broadwood, was hired by Maureen herself from Barry's, and this piano was never locked and the girls could pound on it as much as they pleased.

"Only let me know when you intend to play," said the Rector, "for true music is the delight of my life, whereas such chords and crashes as you produce, to say nothing of your false notes, Henrietta, have a very unpleasant effect upon me."

"Well, I am sure," said Henrietta, "I was always remarked at school for my glorious voice. They said that if I wasn't so rich I ought to go in for opera, and I am sure Daisy plays my accompaniments first rate."

"I do so," said Daisy. "I have two big chords for the bass, and play the tune with one or two fin-

gers for the treble. I am told it has a very pleasing effect."

"Well, play your own way," said the Rector, "but don't ask me to admire what is not music."

All this time the hearts of the two girls were waxing very hot within them. They had looked in vain for any medical book in their father's library, and at last they determined to drive into Kingsala and ask the chemist to give them some rat poison.

"We must be careful of one thing," said Henrietta to her sister; "we do not want to *kill* the horse, we only want to make him very ill. Then *she'll* get into a pepper and we'll pretend to sympathise, and have our lark all the time."

Accordingly, on a beautiful bright morning, the Misses Mostyn implored their step-father to lend them the phaeton in order to drive to Kingsala.

"What do you want to do there, my dears?"

"Oh, lots of the sort of things that men don't take any interest in," said Henrietta. "We want to furnish ourselves up a little. They say Barry's shop isn't half bad."

"Oh, ribbons and laces," said the Rector. "Well, I have no particular use for my horse this morning, and Laurence, the groom, can drive you in. Would you like to go too, Maureen, my pet? You could take Kitty with you and choose her summer hat for her."

"Oh, Uncle Pat, Kitty doesn't want a summer hat. I have just finished the third of those pretty

white muslin ones, and nothing could look sweeter on her dear little head. No, I don't think I want to go; not to-day at least. Thank you all the same, Uncle Pat."

About an hour later Henrietta and Daisy were driving off in the phaeton to Kingsala. The Rector with his increased means was thinking of buying a smart little pony-trap for two ponies, which would exactly suit Maureen and Kitty. He had heard that there was the very trap and also the small ponies for sale in the auction mart in Cork, and determined to start off the following day to try and secure them. Garry could manage the ponies as well as the spirited Arab. The Rector would go round to the stables and speak to him at once on the subject. Maureen's birthday, when she would be fifteen, was drawing nigh, and he thought that a new pony trap would be a nice present for her.

He felt very happy as he paced about his neatly-kept grounds and tried as far as possible to banish the thought of the Mostyn girls from his mind. Of course he was bound to look after them, but he could not like them. In fact, they tried him inexpressibly.

Meanwhile, the said girls, in every scrap of finery they could collect, drove to the town where their mother had so often been before them. Mrs. O'Brien was very well known; the Misses Mostyn were not known at all. The little town was all alive and eager, for a regatta was going on that day, and the bay was full of beautiful yachts, and Patrick's Quay

was crowded with spectators. The chemist intended to shut up shop and join the group, who watched the different races, as soon as possible. He was a young man with carrotty hair and sunken chin. His name was Driscoll.

Now Driscoll was by no means pleased at the arrival of fresh customers. He didn't want either them or their money; he was all agog for the beautiful races, and hated to have his time interfered with. The Misses Mostyn were not attractive-looking girls. Daisy saw his impatience at a glance and immediately proceeded to take advantage of it. Driscoll pretended not to see her drift, but he took the measure of the young lady.

"What may ye be wanting?" he asked. "Don't ye know that this is a holiday? And I'm just on the p'int of shutting up shop."

"Oh, it won't take you a minute, Mr. Driscoll," said Daisy. "Father is the Rector of Templemore, and couldn't come himself, so he sent us. He wants us to buy some rat-poison."

"Are ye the daughters of she who bruk her neck?" asked Driscoll.

"We are—we are lone orphans on the mother's side," said Daisy; "but we couldn't have a better father."

"Ye are right there; a holier man never walked the road. What is it ye said he was wanting?"

"Rat poison. Please give it to us quickly. It isn't for us; it is for the Rector."

"Did he send in a prescription?"

"No; whatever is that?"

"I can't sell pisons without a prescription," said Driscoll. "I'd get into a fine mess. If the Rector is troubled with rats—though I thought I'd banished every one of them some months ago when 'herself' was alive—he'd best write to me and I'll send it to him. No, ladies, I'm sorry to be disobliging, but without a prescription no pison will ye get."

"Oh, dear, dear," said Henrietta; "father will be so disappointed. Perhaps there are some other chemists in the town who won't be so particular, Mr.—Mr. Driscoll."

"Another chemist!" Driscoll threw up his hands. "Could Kingsala support two, I'd like to ask ye? No; I'm the wan and the sole wan. I sold some rat-poison to 'herself' a time back; but I suppose when the rats were gone she was wise enough to destroy it. There now, I must say good-day to ye, ladies, for I must shut up shop."

The girls felt a good deal disappointed, but they were the sort of young people who kept their feelings to themselves. They marched about the town and peeped into Barry's shop and entered and bought yards upon yards of pale blue ribbon, which they desired the man to put down to the Reverend Patrick O'Brien, as they were his daughters.

Presently they found themselves on Patrick's Quay, which was now packed and crowded with eager spectators. The greatest yacht-race of the season

was about to come off. The *Sea Foam*, a magnificent yacht, belonging to the Earl of Banbury, was to compete against the *Sea Sprite*, a local yacht belonging to a Mr. Jagoe.

Excitement had risen to its extreme height. All the population wanted Jagoe's yacht to win, but the *Sea Foam* out-did her with the utmost ease, flying gracefully like a bird over the bosom of the waters, out of the inner harbour into the outer and then back again, beating the *Sea Sprite* by a matter of at least ten minutes. The *Sea Sprite* came to her anchorage looking dull and dusty, with her sails torn, for the wind had got up a good bit; but the *Sea Foam* lay like a white swan, calm and at rest on the waters.

The great races were followed by little races, sailing boats and row-boats and canoe races. The whole scene was most brilliant and charming, and every girl in the place put on all the finery she possessed, and all the men members of the yachting club were in white flannels. Nobody spoke to Henrietta or to Daisy, though the chemist approached them once and said, "Have ye got that there rat-pison?" but Henrietta in the midst of her present surroundings, threw up her head in extreme haughtiness and said: "Sir, I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"*Driscoll* by name, and *Cautious* by nature," replied the chemist. He then turned and said something to his companion, a pretty little girl of his own class. They both looked at the Misses Mostyn, and

both laughed loudly, and Henrietta and Daisy thought it as well to start on their homeward way.

As they were approaching the Rectory, Daisy said in a low voice, which she could assume at will and which certainly the groom could not hear, "I have a notion in my head, Henny-penny!"

"What is that, Daisy? To tell the truth, I'm about tired of your notions. They never come to anything at all."

"Well, but this one will—this one will," said Daisy, skipping up and down in the phaeton as she spoke. "Don't you remember what that horrid man Driscoll said—that he had sold rat-poison to mumsie some time ago; so there must have been rats once at Templemore. He said also, of course, that naturally mumsie pumsie would destroy the poison when the rats were gone—but I'm by no means so sure of that. It was not a bit the way of the careless old duck."

"Well?" said Henrietta.

"Well, what I'm thinking is this: that we have got to find what is left of the rat-poison."

"Oh," said Henrietta, "I haven't a notion where to look for it." She yawned as she spoke. "These long drives do make one so sleepy," she said.

"You don't seem interested in anything, Henny. You are an old goose!"

"Am I? Well, that's better than being a young gosling."

"By the way," said Daisy, "I remember a lovely

story. I know it is true, for a girl at our dear old school told it to me. It happened to a lady she knew, and she said it was as true as paint. It was this: There was a very, very stout old body—oh, monstrous stout, but not really ill, only hypochondriacal, and of course she was always and forever sending for the doctor. He was a country doctor, but he had a sense of humour in him. One day the old dame said to Doctor Macgregor, ‘Doctor, I’m about to visit London.’ ‘Are ye now that?’ said he. You see, she was an Irish body and she spoke the Irish brogue. ‘And is it you that will cross the sea, Miss Marmaduke?’ ‘Yes, to be sure,’ she answered; ‘and why not?’ ‘Well,’ said the doctor, who was a bit of a wag, ‘ye’ll be mighty sick, ye know.’ ‘I suppose I will,’ she answered. ‘Maybe I’ll die. But I’ve a great longing to see London town.’ ‘Ye won’t die,’ said the doctor, ‘if that is what ye are thinking of. But ye’ll be mighty uncomfortable with all that fat on yer body. You’ll wish yourself safe back in Dublin, that ye will.’ ‘Well, anyway, I’m going,’ said the stout lady, ‘and I’ll tell ye what it is, Doctor Macgregor, I don’t think ye make half enough of my illness and suffering.’ ‘Me not think enough of them!’ said he. ‘Why, I’m thinking of them day and night.’ ‘Well, to be sure, are ye now,’ said the lady. ‘But there is one thing I must say to you, doctor, you haven’t a sympathetic manner.’ ‘It doesn’t do for a doctor to be sympathetic with his patients,’ said the doctor. ‘Sympathy would kill

them off like flies.’ ‘I am surprised to hear ye say that,’ said the stout lady; ‘I should have thought it would have done them a power of good. Well, anyway, ye must acknowledge that I am ill.’ ‘Oh, very ill, ma’am; very ill entirely.’ ‘Then I think as I am going to London,’ said the stout lady, ‘that you might write a letter to the cleverest doctor there—an Irishman if ye can find one—and give me the letter to take to him, and I’ll be bound I’ll get out what is the matter with me.’ ‘Well, to be sure, I’ll do that,’ said the doctor. ‘I know the very man, too—Malony of Harley Street. When are ye going to cross the briny?’ ‘To-morrow as ever is,’ she replied. ‘Well, I’ll give ye a note to Malony which will clinch the business. Ye mustn’t be frightened at anything he says to ye, for ye must remember ye have brought it on yourself.’

“So the next day that wag of a fellow brought her a letter and told her to call on the great Doctor Malony and put his letter carefully into the hands of the great man, and to make up her mind for a really bad verdict. The stout old lady was delighted, for she loved bad verdicts. She got on board the boat and as the sea was rough, she suffered a good deal from sickness; but the sicker she was the more she liked herself, and the worse she was the tighter she clasped Doctor Macgregor’s letter in her hand. The sea certainly was rough, and most of the passengers were sick, and the stewardess brought the fat old lady some brandy and water to drink. The boat gave

a great roll that moment and lo and behold! in a minute the beautiful letter which was to seal the stout lady's doom was sopped through and through with brandy and water. She felt angry for a moment, but then it flashed through her mind that she'd open it, for it was quite soft like pulp, and she would be able to see for herself what Doctor Macgregor said about his patient. 'At the least, it must be the beginning of cancer,' she murmured. 'Dear, dear, dear! But anyhow, he'll tell the truth to a brother physician, and it is as well for me to know.'

"Well, Henny-penny, what do you think? They were getting towards the harbour then, and it wasn't so rough, and she was able to read the words inside the letter; and if ever a woman's eyes dilated and if ever her heart throbbed, the fat old lady's did then, for Doctor Macgregor's letter was brief and to the point: 'Dear Malony,' it ran, '*I am sending you a fat goose. Pluck her well and send her back to me!*' You may be quite sure, Henny-penny, that the fat old lady never went near Malony; but she tore the letter in little bits and went to a quack, who told her she had innumerable illnesses, all jumbled together, and if there was any chance of her life, she must undergo at least four operations; so she was as happy as the day was long. I declare you have scarcely smiled, and I doing my level best to amuse you! Well, here we are back at Templemore. Now then, jump out. I'm starving for tea if you aren't."

The girls went into the house. Maureen and Kitty

were away. Neither Dominic nor Denis were anywhere to be found, and the Rector was as usual visiting his sick and sorry parishioners.

The girls took their tea soberly, Henrietta hardly thinking at all and feeling half asleep, but Daisy's brain being, as usual, very much on the alert. When tea was a thing of the past and Burke had cleared away all traces of it from the great hall, Daisy made her invariable remark: "How many new-laid eggs and how much peach-jam did you eat in the kitchen to-night, Burke?"

Burke stared glumly at the young lady, and made no answer of any sort; Daisy lost her temper a little and flew at Burke and said, "You *are* a nasty thief of an old man."

"If you plaze, miss, ye'll have the goodness to lave me alone," Burke replied. He then walked with a dignity which the girl herself would never possess out of the hall and in the direction of the kitchens.

"Pegeen," he said, "it's me heart that's bruk entirely."

"Ah, wisha, honey," said Pegeen, "I wouldn't fret for the likes o' they."

"They have come to that pass that they accuse me —ME—of theft. Am I likely to put up with that?"

"Is it me 'ud do it?" said Pegeen; "I'd scratch their faces for 'em. But you being a rale jintleman, Mr. Burke, honey, couldn't do that; but I'll do it for ye, quick, as soon as possible."

Meanwhile Henrietta strolled languidly into the

drawing-room. She opened the piano supplied by Barry and produced false chords and crashes which would have sent Maureen or the Rector flying from the house; but Daisy left her to her amusement and went softly, very softly upstairs. She had long ago regretted her silly nonsense about the banshee and the haunted room, for that north chamber where she and her sister slept was the reverse of comfortable. The great spacious, lovely bedroom, which had been her mother's, was now occupied by the Rector of Templemore, and next to it was the little dressing-room belonging to Maureen. Daisy's flaxen head stole cautiously round the door of the big room. It was empty. So much the better. She now went on tiptoe, trembling in her excitement, towards a little old medicine closet, which was let into the wall.

This medicine closet had not been opened or cleaned or touched since the late Mrs. O'Brien's death, and it was the thought of that little cabinet and of what it might possibly contain which had made Daisy's heart so light and her voice so merry on her way home. Now she opened it wide and began to explore. There were all sorts of dusty, grimy bottles within, some half full, some empty, some bearing the words "Sal Volatile," some bearing the words "Ipecacuanha," others "Epsom Salts," others "Ginger," others "Peppermint." But in the back of the cupboard, pushed out of sight, stood a small row of very dark blue bottles with poison written on them in large letters.

Daisy's heart almost choked her with delight. One contained laudanum, and the directions were, "To be rubbed over the affected parts when the pain is severe." Another contained belladonna, with the same directions, and on each bottle was inscribed the words, "*Not to be taken internally.* POISON." But Daisy's eyes lit up with bliss when she came across a little pot marked *Rat-poison*, and with full directions how to use it.

"Spread some of the mixture on thin bread and butter and leave it near the rat-hole. The contents of this pot are principally arsenic and phosphorus. A dose sufficient to kill a dozen rats can be put on a very small square of bread."

Daisy put the rest of the bottles back into their places and danced downstairs to Henny-penny.

"Seek—find! Which hand?" she exclaimed. Her tiny eyes were blazing with delight.

Henrietta turned from her strumming on the piano to look at her.

"What is the matter with you, Daisy? What are you so excited about?"

"Come up to our bedroom at once," she said. "I have just grand news for you. Come along as fast as ever you like."

Henrietta began to feel really excited. She followed her sister upstairs. They locked themselves into the ugly bedroom, and there Daisy told the story of her great discovery. Henrietta listened in breathless silence.

"Where's the horse now?" she asked.

"Out, of course, with that little brat Maureen. We'll do it to-night, Henny; we'll do it to-night."

Henrietta turned the rat-poison round and round.

"I don't think," she said, after a pause, "he'll eat his mash if some of this horrid stuff is put into it. You said the mumsie had other poisons."

"Oh, yes; laudanum and belladonna."

"Well, I think if I were you, Daisy, I'd put this rat-poison back again and secure the bottle with the laudanum. He would not taste that if it was well mixed up in a big soft mash. You know, we mustn't kill him. I declare positively against that. How much do you think we might venture to put in?"

"I don't know," said Daisy. "I wish I did."

Then she clapped her hands excitedly. "I know, I know!" she exclaimed. "I'll ask the village nurse, Miss Duncom."

"Then you give yourself away," said Henny. "You quite frighten me, Daisy."

"It is because I don't want to frighten you that I ask the village nurse. I shan't mention the horse's name. Of course not. Now I know Miss Duncom is going to Mrs. Haggarty's cottage to dress the old woman's leg, and I'll catch her as sure as sure. I'll keep the laudanum bottle up in our room until we want it. I'll manage to creep into Fly-away's loose box by means of the window. I know that that detestable Garry always brings him his mash the last thing, and then locks him in for the night. Now,

don't keep me, Henny. I'll change this rat-poison. The laudanum will be miles better."

"Oh, do be careful," said her sister.

Daisy presently dashed into their joint bedroom. She had put back the rat-poison and had brought up the little dark blue bottle of laudanum.

"Here, hide it under your bed," she exclaimed.

"No; under yours," said Henrietta.

"As you please," remarked Daisy. "Only it seems *I* have all the trouble while you have the fun. Think of her screeching and raving over her dying horse, and I'll have done it all—all."

"The horse is not to die," said Henrietta.

"Well, I suppose you do not mind his being made ill?"

"No, I don't mind that. I don't mind giving her a fright."

"Well, then, let me go off, for goodness' sake."

Daisy dashed up the avenue and arrived at Mrs. Haggarty's. As she expected, Nurse Duncom was there. She was a remarkably nice-looking young woman, and all the people in the place adored her. The bandaging of the leg had taken place, and she was just leaving the cottage, when she saw Daisy.

"Why, Miss Mostyn, is anything wrong? Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Oh, nothing really wrong," said Daisy; "only I don't want to frighten father. He loves me so much. I suffer at night from such horrible pains in my tummy-tum, and I found in dear mother's old

medicine cupboard a little bottle of laudanum. Do you think I might take a few drops?"

"I don't think you ought to take any," said Nurse Duncom. "It is a very dangerous medicine, and I should not dream of ordering it for you. You could have peppermint or something harmless of that sort."

"But, please, would three drops kill me?"

"Certainly not. I dare say you could manage to take eight drops, provided you gave them to yourself in a measure glass, without coming to any harm; but I cannot possibly *order* them for you."

"If a—a cow was in awful pain, would you give it more than that?"

"Undoubtedly, though I don't know anything about the treatment of cows. What queer questions you are asking me, Miss Mostyn. The cow is a much larger animal and can stand a much bigger dose, but really I would not dream of ordering laudanum for any creature. I am sorry you are suffering; probably it is indigestion. I will send you up a little bottle of peppermint to-night, and you can take from ten to fifteen drops in a little water. That is *quite* safe. Good-bye now, Miss Mostyn. I must hurry to old Burchell. Talk of pain! Ah, you little know what it means. I must give him his dose of morphia, but nothing will save his life. Still, he will be looking out for me, and the morphia keeps the worst agonies under."

Daisy danced back to her sister.

"I have everything as pat as pat," she said. Little

she cared for Burchell's dying agonies. "I saw Duncom and she told me. I did not give myself away in the least. We must give Fly-away from sixteen to twenty drops of the laudanum. Luckily there is a little medicine glass in mumsie's cupboard. I'll measure it into that. Then he'll get rather bad, but he won't die. Hurrah! Hurrah! I *am* a clever girl!"

CHAPTER XIII.

FLY-AWAY.

DAISY, in her way, without being in the least intellectual, and without having the smallest taste for the great and ennobling things of life, was nevertheless clever. She had the artfulness of the crooked mind, and she could carry out her designs with exactitude and promptness. She pretended to be frightened, but neither she nor Henny knew what fear was. Henny was, in some ways, the better character—that is, if stupidity could be called good. She could hate with great vigour; she never dreamt of love unless, indeed, she loved Daisy. She liked to listen to Daisy's designs, which were always mischievous and wicked, but she could not carry them out herself, although she would be faithful to her sister to the last drop of her blood.

Daisy was the only person who really belonged to her. She had therefore a certain passion for this queer, crabbed nature. Therefore, she was led by Daisy, who told her that she must pretend to be fond of father, and she did pretend. She would have flirted with Dominic if he had allowed her, but Dominic knew how to keep her at a distance. Try as

she might, try as she would, she could not bridge the gulf which stood between her and him. That gulf also extended itself between Dominic and Daisy. The fact was that he was an exceedingly sharp lad; he read their characters aright and, as far as lay in his power, protected his dear little cousin Maureen and his sweet baby sister Kitty from their machinations. But even Dominic could not guess what was passing through Daisy's mind on that special evening. He only noticed that she was in particularly good spirits, that she and Henrietta laughed and joked and whispered, and presently that they became suddenly quiet and sat one at each side of the Rector on the old Chesterfield sofa. They petted the Rector a good deal, calling him "father" and "dear father" and "dearest dad" and "ownest duck," and the poor Rector endured their most unwelcome embraces and their silly words until finally, in despair, he asked Maureen to sing for him.

Maureen sat down to the upright Broadwood and sang that most haunting of all melodies:

"Rich and rare were the gems she wore
And a bright gold ring on her hand she bore;
But oh! her beauty was far beyond
Her sparkling gems and snow-white hand.

"'Lady! dost thou not fear to stray,
So lone and lovely thro' this bleak way,
Are Erin's sons so good or so cold
As not to be tempted by woman or gold?'

“‘Sir Knight! I feel not the least alarm,
No son of Erin will offer me harm;—
For tho’ they love woman and golden store,
Sir Knight! they love honour and virtue more.’

“On she went and her maiden smile
In safety carried her round the green isle;
And blest forever is she who relied
Upon Erin’s honour and Erin’s pride.”

The girl’s sweet, clear voice ceased. It died away in a soft wave of most exquisite melody; her brown eyes were full of tears. She raised them to Dominic’s face; he was astonished at those rare tears. He had, oh! so seldom, seen Maureen cry.

The boy bent towards her with all the true chivalry of a true Irish knight and gentleman. “What is it, mavourneen?” he whispered.

“It is only that I am glad, oh! so glad, that my father was an Irish gentleman and soldier,” she replied, in a voice as low as his.

By this time the conspirators, as they called themselves, had left the room.

“There, you saw for yourself,” said Henny.
“Did you ever come across such affectation?”

“Never,” said Daisy; “never!”

“I’m ready for anything now,” said Henny.

“Well,” said Daisy. “I think everything is complete. Garry always locks the stable door at ten o’clock. He sleeps exactly overhead. I do hate that Garry.”

"Well, go on, Daisy. Don't mind about your hates now!"

Daisy laughed spitefully.

"It is at the present moment," she said, "exactly a quarter to ten. I unlatched one of the windows in the stable to-day, and I secured a dark lantern, and I want you to come out with me and help to push me through the window. It is easily done, and I can fasten it, or push it to at least, when I come out again. I'll crouch in a dark corner, and when I know Garry has gone to bed I'll light the dark lantern and measure the drops of laudanum. I have brought mumsie's measuring glass and the bottle, and I stole the dark lantern to-day when I knew no one was looking. Then when Fly-away is eating his hot mash, I'll pour in the laudanum, *eighteen* drops. I'll give him his quietus, don't you fear!"

"Daisy, you are *not* to kill him!"

"Henny-penny, don't be such a fool. Of course. I won't kill him; is it likely? You leave everything to your clever little sister, and by to-morrow morning we'll have that sweet 'Rich and rare' roaring and squealing and kicking her heels in the drawing-room; and then we must both pet her like anything and sympathise like anything. The horse will recover, of course, but he'll be bad for a bit. That's all. Didn't Miss Duncom tell me about the safe dose. I'm no fool. Only do come along!"

The girls slipped down the back-stairs and out into the yard. They were wearing dark cloaks,

which completely covered their white dresses, and Daisy had her lantern, medicine glass, and bottle of laudanum all safely stowed away under her cloak. It was nearly ten o'clock. She hadn't a minute to spare. Making a desperate effort with the aid of Henny from behind, she pushed her way into the stable where the Arab neighed a trifle uneasily.

"I'm all right," she whispered to her sister. "The only thing is that I have broken the medicine glass. Well, I can easily guess the drops—sixteen. You get off to the house, Henny, or you'll be caught."

Henny scampered away, her heart palpitating with uneasiness. She saw a light under the drawing-room door as she sped by. The family had evidently not yet gone to bed. The Rector was reading some lovely poetry aloud, and Dominic and Maureen were listening. The Rector could read poetry like no man in the county. He was now delighting his young listeners with the "Prisoner of Chillon." His voice rose and swelled. Dominic stood up in a sort of rapture. As the pathos grew Maureen hid her little pale face against her uncle's sleeve. Whatever happened, she could not cry a second time that evening.

Meanwhile Daisy settled herself as comfortably as she could in the darkest corner of the stable. There was Fly-away's loose box close to her and a great bundle of hay for him to eat if he felt hungry. But he was a horse of perfectly regulated habits, and he invariably waited for his hot mash at ten o'clock.

The stable clock struck the hour, solemnly in great

strokes. Fly-away pricked up his small ears. There came a sound outside—a man's step on the cobblestones, then Garry entered with the mash, hot and delicious. He placed it just before the animal, stroked him affectionately on his black head and silky, satin-like sides, and said: "Good-night to ye, Fly-away. Slape well, my blessing." And then he left the stable, locking the door behind him.

Garry had intended to go into the kitchen for a bit, to have a chat with Pegeen and Burke, with both of whom he was a prime favourite, but something prompted him not to do it that night. He could not quite tell why. He said to himself afterwards that "he was sort of onaisy in his mind." He went up therefore at once to his bedroom and was preparing to go to rest when he saw something very peculiar and uncanny. It was no less than a streak of light, thin and like a shaft, which penetrated up through the beams of the roof of the stable and entered his room.

"May the Almighty presarve us," muttered the man. "Is it the pixies are about or what?"

He had not begun to undress. In a moment he had rushed down his step-ladder, and, going to the stable-door, unlocked it. Yes, he was in time—but only just in time. He saw a sight which he never forgot as long as he lived. He saw a girl with flaxen hair lit up to a very pale gold by means of the lantern. She was hastily uncorking a bottle of laudanum. She was so absorbed in her task, so much

afraid of being interrupted and of not getting the deed done before Fly-away had finished his mash that a reckless spirit came over her.

She could not possibly wait to drop the laudanum into the mash, for the horse was eating rapidly and hungrily. Laying her dark lantern on the ground, she rushed into the loose box and dashed what she considered would be sixteen drops but what was in reality much more like three times that number, into the mash. Then with her dainty finger she stirred it round and round.

The horse, interrupted in his feed for the moment, was beginning to resume it when, like a flash, Garry took the basin that contained the hot mash, and put it outside on the cobble-stones, taking care, however, not to spill its contents. He then secured the girl's hand, the bottle of laudanum, which was really almost empty, and the dark lantern, and saying: "You come along o' me this minute!" he dragged the reluctant, terrified Daisy out of the place.

"I didn't mean it, I didn't mean it!" she began to sob. "I was only going to give him a few drops. I wouldn't kill him for the world, nor would Henny. I wouldn't indeed! Oh, please, please, Garry, let me off; he hasn't touched one drop."

But Garry, though an Irishman, could on occasion be mute as though he was turned into stone. This was one of those occasions. The Rector had

finished the "Prisoner of Chillon" and was repeating, as only he knew how,

"Hame, hame, hame, O hame fain wad I be.
Oh, hame, hame, hame, to my ain countree!"

The two children were standing before him spell-bound with the ecstasy which his recitations of poetry always gave them. Suddenly in the brightly-lighted room there appeared Garry the groom, accompanied by a shrunken-up sort of girl, who was too much afraid to speak or look at any one. She would have rushed to the Rector for refuge, calling him father, dear father, but Garry had clutched her by her shoulder.

"You stay here," he said. "I ha' got a story to tell. We near lost the horse; but for the Providence above, we'd ha' done it!"

"What horse?" said Maureen, turning ghastly.

"Your horse, miss—dear, darlin' Fly-away! I don't know what was over me. I took him his mash as usual, and he began to gobble it up hungry as ye plaze, and his coat never looked blacker or more like satin. Well, to be sure, I was satisfied enough with him, and I locked the stable-door as usual. But it was the Holy Vargin I think—I do believe it was—for I meant to go as usual to have a bit of a gossip with Pegeen and Burke, but somehow, your Riverence and Miss Maureen, I felt mighty quare, and sort of *onaisy* in me mind, so I went up to bed; and my

room is just over the horse's loose box, as ye know, sir. Well, that room was made somewhat in a hurry when the Colonel gave the horse to Miss Maureen, and the planks weren't to say rightly jined—that is, on the floor, I mean, y'Riverence—and what should I see when about to lay meself on me bed, but a sthrake of light, sharp and clear and werry narrer coming up direct from below. Me heart it leeped into me mouth, and I was down in no time at all, and I unlocked the door, and the sight that met me—— Oh, may I never see a worse! There was this colleen pouring something out of a bottle into the mash, and the horse he was just bending his head to go on with his supper, and she, with her delicate fingers stirrin' the stuff round and round in the mash. It war then I cotched hold of her. First I lifted the mash and put it outside, and here's what she was giving to the horse, y'Riverence. She can't go for to deny it, for she did it herself. She had a dark lantern—one that belongs to the place, y'Riverence. Oh, my word, but I have saved my beauty, and don't you fret, colleen asthore, for I'll get a fresh mash in a clean dish and lay meself down alongside o' Fly-away for the whole of this blessed night. Good evening to you, sir. Good evening, colleen asthore. Masther Dominic, perhaps I might have a word with yez."

Dominic followed the honest fellow out of the room.

"Garry," he said, "is it possible she could be so wicked?"

"I tol't what I seen," said Garry. "I can't tel't no more. Oh, my word, my word. I'm all trimbling-like!"

"Garry, you are a right down splendid fellow. I'm going to give you a hot tumbler of punch, for well you deserve it. The horse is safe now."

"I left the bottle with the masther," continued Garry. "I wonder what was in it, that I do."

But the master and Maureen had read the words on the bottle: "Laudanum. POISON. Not to be taken internally."

Daisy stood sobbing before them. In her fright and Garry's sudden appearance she had emptied the greater part of the bottle into the mash. There was very little of it left.

"Maureen, my darling, will you go to bed?" said her uncle.

"Must I?" said Maureen.

"I would rather, dearest. I will come to you presently to your room. Your horse is safe, thanks to that good Garry."

The child went away, but she had a queer new sort of look on her face, a look she had never worn before, that no one had ever seen on the sweet face of Maureen. As she passed Daisy, she stopped for a minute, and forced the girl's small, terrified eyes to look at her.

"Do you know," said Maureen, "that for the first

time in all my life I understand what *hatred* is? I—HATE—YOU!”

She left the room without another word. Daisy shivered. In the moment of getting her desire—for had she not longed for Maureen to hate her?—she found it like ashes, and worse than ashes, in her mouth. She still stood in front of the Rector with her eyes down, her freckled, colourless face very pale, only the freckles stood out and made a sort of ghastly relief to the awful pallor.

“Daisy, come here!” said the Rector.

Daisy approached very timidly, one step at a time. She walked delicately, as Agag of old.

“Daisy, will you explain this to me?”

“Will you listen to me, father?”

“Yes, I am here. I am prepared to listen. But first, I have something to say before you begin your story. I do not wish you or Henrietta ever again to call me *father*. I am *not* your father. Your father was a different sort of man. I married your mother, but during her lifetime I never once saw you. You came here, you and Henrietta, and turned this happy home into Bedlam. You shall address me, whenever you have occasion to in the future, as *Mister O'Brien*. You understand?”

“Ye-es. *She* said she hated me, and she *looked—oh*, how she looked!”

“Can you wonder? Aren’t you amazed at her forbearance? Do you know that this is laudanum?”

He held up the little bottle.

"I happened to see a bottle of laudanum in my room a few days ago and meant to throw it away. My wife, your poor mother, often suffered from rheumatic pains and she used to like to rub the affected parts with a strong opiate. I did not approve the plan. Now please tell me how you came by this bottle."

"I went into your room when you were out and stole it."

"Then you deliberately meant to kill Maureen's lovely horse, that creature of life and fire? Could you do it, could you?"

"I did not mean to kill him. Henrietta was in the plan, too, and she—she said the horse mustn't be killed. I only meant to make him very, very sick."

"But why?"

"Because I hated Maureen."

"Ah, well," said Mr. O'Brien, "you have spoken the truth at last. Now understand me clearly—understand me fully. You and your sister go with me to-morrow to Jane Faithful's. I will arrange with her—I will tell her exactly what you are both like. Your sister is bad, but you are fifty times worse. You and Henrietta and I will leave for Jane Faithful's school by an early train to-morrow. You hated Maureen, the gentlest, the sweetest little girl in the world. Why have you been so cruel to her? Has she not tried by every power, every endeavour to love you—to be good to you; and yet you deliberately turned her young life into a living hell. You

tried to ruin her piano. Did she answer you back? No. She only did what she could to have the noble instrument preserved. She asked Colonel Herbert to take care of it for the present. He asked in astonishment for her reason, but she would not give him any. Yes—you hated Maureen—you have said the words. You said also that you did not mean to kill the horse, but you put enough laudanum into his mash to kill several horses. Your word therefore goes for nothing.

“Perhaps you understand now what *hatred* to you feels like. I can well imagine that Maureen’s hatred, when at last it is aroused, will be a very terrible thing; something like the hatred of an angry God. Come up with me at once to your room and your sister’s room. I shall ask her if she was aware of what you were about to do. I think she will tell me the truth. Afterwards I will lock you both up in your bedroom. Your breakfast will be sent to you at an early hour. You had better pack to-night. You will both stay in that room until I myself come to fetch you in the morning. I will send Jane Faithful a wire to expect us. Come, Daisy—no screaming, please. Come at once.”

The Rector hardly touched the little cold hand, but the miserable girl followed him as meek as a mouse.

When they reached the dismal, untidy room Mr. O’Brien put his question to Henrietta. She replied

that she knew all about it, but had implored Daisy not to use enough of the medicine to kill the horse.

"That is enough," said the Rector. He locked the door and went away.

The two girls were locked into the ugly north bedroom, and then and there Daisy screamed and shrieked to her heart's delight, and Henny-penny bent over her and finally dashed cold water on her head, and so brought her to her senses.

"You little fool," she said. "I *knew* you'd make mischief. A nice time we have before us. Well, at least we can run away."

"Yes, we can run away. Oh, Henny, love me! It was awful when *she* said she hated me. She said it with such strange, strong power. Oh, Henny, I'm afraid of her now."

"Get into bed, gosling, and I'll lie down by your side. No, I don't quite hate you, but I think you are a poor sort. We can run away from that female, who I imagine keeps a school; but for the time being we must pretend to submit."

Meanwhile, the Rector went down to Maureen. She was standing icy-cold by her window. She had not attempted to undress. There was the same strange new look in her eyes.

"I don't want to hear the story, uncle," she said. "I'm too wicked, wicked. I *hate*—I *hate*—I *hate*!"

"My child—my darling. Come and get into my arms."

"No, I couldn't—I couldn't, not while I feel as

I do now. Oh, Uncle Pat, Satan got into me when I said I HATE, and he's in me still."

The Rector saw that the child was terribly excited. He himself helped her to undress and made her lie down in her little bed, and gave her a certain soothing draught which he knew would be good for her and would make her sleep and forget her troubles.

All the time while she was dropping to sleep the Rector was holding her hand, and all that long time he prayed very hard. He prayed that the evil spirit might leave the sweetest nature in the world and that the good spirit of all perfection might return.

At last the child slept, and then Mr. O'Brien went and had a long talk with Dominic. He told him what his plans were, and put Maureen into his care whilst he was absent. He suggested that the Colonel and the Doctor might be sent for if necessary.

"She has got a frightful shock," he said; "a frightful shock."

"I'll manage her, dad," said Dominic; but the first streaks of the summer morning were illuminating the sky before the boy and his father lay down to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

FELICITY.

THE long journey from the south of Ireland to the old-fashioned, old-world town of Lutterworth, in the midland counties of England, took some time. Lutterworth is renowned for its memories of the great Wyclif, where his church, his Bible, and many other relics of his time are still to be found. The town stands on a slope, but the church, the rectory, the well-known grammar school stand on a vast plain, where the freshest of all fresh air blows and where health is the order of the hour.

But what ailed the Rector of Templemore? It seemed as though a force was driving him. He had heard of course of the school where he meant to take his step-daughters. He had heard of its excellent qualities; he had even more than once met that most splendid woman, Jane Faithful.

The crossing was a rough one and the girls knew at last what seasickness meant. They were glad, however, to go to school, for they had enjoyed themselves in their wild fashion in the school on the outskirts of Dublin which had been selected for them by their mother.

Henrietta and Daisy now supposed that they were going to a like establishment. They little guessed what lay before them. They were crossing over to cold England, a country their mother hated, and which they could not be expected to love. They expected great sympathy when they were seasick, but they only received the ordinary care of the much-tried stewardess.

At last they arrived at Fishguard, and the Rector took them at once third-class to London. They would have given the world to stay in London for even one night, but when they suggested this to the Rector, he said in his quiet voice: "We continue our journey to Lutterworth."

It was late in the evening when they reached Lutterworth. A cab had been ordered and was waiting for them, and they drove straight to Mrs. Faithful's house.

They passed the noble old church and the beautiful grammar school, but still they drove on and on, until finally they turned into a country lane and stopped before a neatly kept wooden gate. Here the driver got down, opened the gate, and fastened it back carefully; then the Rector and the two girls found themselves driving up the long and winding avenue.

Although it was now the middle of summer, neither Henrietta nor Daisy could see much of where they were coming to. The house, the Rector told them, was called Felicity. It was decidedly old-fashioned, and was built of stone. It had many little

windows with small panes of glass. There was a great bell at the front door. The Rector pulled the bell.

"This is my friend's house, and your future home," he said, turning gravely to his step-daughters. "Mrs. Faithful is not only my friend but my cousin. Ah, Jane, you have opened the door for me yourself! I have brought the girls. Have you any one who can look after them and give them supper. I have a great deal to talk over with you, my dear Jane."

"What a horrid old maid of a creature!" muttered Daisy.

Mrs. Faithful pursed up her mouth, but did not utter a syllable. She fixed her large and really kind eyes, however, in a decidedly uncomfortable manner on the young people.

"I will ring for Dawson," she said. "She will attend to the girls and give them what is necessary. I have had a cosy supper prepared for you, Patrick. You don't look too strong, dear kinsman. Come this way, pray, to the Hall of Refreshment. Ah, here is Dawson! Dawson, give the young ladies their supper, and then take them to the Chamber of Penitence and see them into bed. I observe they have brought their luggage. Dawson, Smith will help you to take the trunks up to the Chamber of Penitence. Good-night, girls, I will see you to-morrow. Now, Patrick, my man, what is the matter with you?"

It was with a sinking heart that Patrick O'Brien

followed his kinswoman into the Hall of Refreshment. He had too terrible a story to tell. He was also wildly anxious to get back to Maureen. The symptoms of ill-health which had so troubled him were beginning to return under this new strain. Jane Faithful, however, was a woman of few words and mighty deeds. She had not started Felicity for nothing. She had not saved many a rebellious girl for nothing; but her present concern was not for the Misses Mostyn, but for the Rector's sad and sorely troubled face.

She put out a strong, sympathetic hand and touched his.

"Now, kinsman," she said, "you do not utter a word until you are properly refreshed. Here is soup of the very best. Here is a mutton chop which I have specially ordered for you. Here is the last asparagus in my garden, and here is what will do you more good than anything else—a bottle of very old port left to me by my father. Now, eat, man, eat and drink. Afterwards we will go into Confidence next door and you shall tell me your story."

"You always were a strong-minded woman, Jane," said the Rector.

"Yes," replied Jane Faithful. "Now, take your soup."

So the Rector found a sudden sense of support, of support both mental and physical, first in the presence of this brave, good, strong-minded woman, and, second, in the excellent food she provided.

He ate his chop and his asparagus and drank a glass of the excellent port wine.

"Upon my word, Jane," he said, when he had finished, "you do know how to treat a tired man."

"Yes, you are better now. You are staying at Felicity for the night."

"I wish I could; but I must get back to London."

"You can't do it, kinsman; there is no train."

"Oh," said the Rector, with a heavy sigh.

Suddenly he turned and faced Mrs. Faithful.

"Now, may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly. Twenty, if you like."

"Why do you call your rooms by these strange and peculiar names?"

"It is a fashion of my own," was the quiet reply. "I find by long experience that it works well. The idea was first presented to me by one of my dearest friends who keeps a similar school near London; but I assure you, kinsman, we are not unhappy at Felicity. Far, far from that. When once we submit to the rules, which cannot be broken, we feel—both teachers and pupils—a wonderful sense of pleasure, the sort of pleasure, my dear Patrick, which does not belong to this cold earth. Now for you, I have prepared the best bedroom in the house. I call it the Chamber of Peace. The idea was given to me by that noble man, George Macdonald, who kept such a chamber in his lovely Palace at Bordighera. He kept it for the sick and suffering of body, but I keep it for the few I think worthy. Now, come, kinsman,

into Confidence. There we can have our talk out."

Mrs. Faithful was dressed in dark grey, very soft in texture. She wore over her head of snow-white hair a little mobcap of finest muslin. She had a bow at her breast of pale, lilac ribbon, while a similar bow reposed on her white cap. The whole effect was most graceful and pretty. The woman herself was not handsome, but there was something marvelously reposeful about her. Her eyes seemed to look through you. Anything approaching to falsehood could not live in the room with Jane Faithful. In short, she was one of the most highly-esteemed characters in the whole of Lutterworth.

She took her kinsman now into the room she called Confidence. She herself took a hard chair, but placed the Rector in an easy one.

"Now, Patrick, begin at once," she said. "Tell your story and get it off your mind, but I had better say frankly and at once that I am not particularly pleased with the appearance of the young people you have just brought here. I presume you hope to place them under my roof?"

"I indeed trust you will take them, Jane," and then the poor Rector began his sorry tale. He left out nothing, he abbreviated nothing, he told the simple truth from beginning to end. Mrs. Faithful was not one to interrupt.

When the Rector had ceased speaking she said, "This is awful, truly awful. What a girl! *What* a girl!"

"Yes, Jane, you are right. What a girl! But it is my little Maureen whom I am thinking of."

"Ah," she returned quickly, "I could do with one like Maureen."

The Rector went on to describe Maureen's present state of mind. In doing so, he broke down completely.

"She says, that dear and faithful, loving heart, that the Spirit of God has forsaken her and that something evil and awful has entered into her."

"Send her to me for three months and I will cure her," said Jane Faithful; "poor lamb, poor pretty dear. Why, she woke up to find herself that time."

"But I cannot do without her," said Patrick O'Brien. "She is the light and life of my existence, and Colonel Herbert, a near neighbour, is equally devoted to her, and Denis and Dominic and little Kitty all worship her. I cannot give my darling up."

"Well, I intend to make a bargain with you," said Mrs. Faithful. "I don't want those girls at my school. It will be necessary for me to devote a special governess to them, and even she will not be able to prevent them from contaminating the others. I have forty girls at Felicity at the present moment. The two you have brought make two and forty, and are forty to be injured for the sake of two? It isn't to be done. There is only one person who can really save those miserable girls, and that person is Maureen O'Brien. Send her to me. She has her work cut out for her here. It is with me she ought to be at

present, helping me with those two. I'll look after her and see that she is not tormented in any way. She shall sleep in the Chamber of Peace and that Chamber ensures good dreams and sweet slumber. I have a special governess, who comes to me occasionally but not always, for luckily I do not require her always. I shall put that choice pair under her jurisdiction. Luckily she happens to be in the house at the present moment. Her name is Joan Pinchin. She is rather old-fashioned and firm as a rock. She is well educated, and will put the Mostyns through their p's and q's. The girls will sleep in Penitence and do their lessons with her in Correction until Maureen arrives. Joan Pinchin will take them out for necessary exercise. She will be by no means cruel to them, but she will be firm, firm as a rock. Now, is it yes or no? If it is no, you'd best take them back with you to-morrow morning, for I can have nothing more to say to them. There, Patrick, take a night to think over it. Your child shall return to you when her work is done. Now for Peace and the Chamber of Dreams, poor, tired, distracted kinsman. The best train in the day leaves Lutterworth at eight in the morning, and I'll have a cab for one or three of you according to what you decide in order to catch that train. The Angel of Peace be with you and give you rest, Patrick O'Brien."

The distracted Rector found himself in one of the sweetest, purest rooms he had ever seen. It was all white; white paper on the walls, a little snow-white

bed, a white wardrobe with a long glass, a white chest of drawers, a white dressing-table, everything white, white as snow. The windows had white blinds to them and were draped with white muslin curtains frilled all round. There was a curious feeling about the room. Try as you would you could not be fretful here. Like Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, you had to cast your burden outside that door, for you could not take it in. It seemed as though good angels loved to make this white room their home. There were one or two engravings, different pictures of childhood, Reynolds's immortal angels, and a few more, not many, done in pen and ink by well known painters, who had come to celebrity long ago and had given some of the early fruits of their toil to Jane Faithful. All the pictures were either of children or of angels, children in prayer, Fra Angelico's Angels, but there were not many—the walls were mostly bare. On a little table near the bed lay a large Bible, on the dressing-table stood a bowl of white roses, on the dressing-table also was a small exquisitely clean paraffin lamp.

The whiteness and the purity of the room seemed to get into the innermost heart of the Rector. He fell on his knees by the little bed and tears came to his eyes. After a short time, although he had not uttered a word of prayer, he felt strangely, marvelously peaceful, also very sleepy. He undressed and

laid his head on the snowy pillow. Immediately he fell asleep.

In the morning Jane Faithful brought him delicious coffee and home-made rolls to his room.

"I know you have slept well," she said. "I see it in your face. It is a glorious day. See how blue the sky is."

The Rector looked out of one of the windows. Yes, that blue, blue sky was the last perfection to add to the Chamber of Peace.

"Are they to pack their things and go back with you?" asked Jane Faithful.

"No," said the Rector; "but the matter rests with Maureen herself. If you will keep them until you get her decision I will send for them should it be adverse, or send her to you for three months should it be favourable. Don't question me, dear Jane. I am out of the world in this room."

"I never question," replied Jane Faithful. "I knew well the room would do it. Well, be as quick as you can. Let me have the child as soon as possible. It is, believe me, for the saving of souls alive."

The Rector bowed his head and made no further response.

Soon afterwards he was driving away from Felicity and two ugly, raging faces were looking at him out of the small window of Penitence. How they ground their teeth, how they clenched their hands!

"We'll run away, Henny. We can't quite stand this," said Daisy.

"Of course," replied her sister; "but I tell you what it is, old Di, I'm downright afraid of the woman."

"You mean old Faithful," said Daisy.

"Yes, but not only Faithful. The person who brought us in here last night. And what an appalling room this is! All over texts of Scripture. If the room was not so high up, I'd leap from the window, that I would; but if I did, I'd break my neck, like poor mumsie."

"I'm thinking all the time of Maureen," said Daisy. "Her look, her words. Oh, Henny, Henny, when Maureen looked at us and said so solemnly, '*I—hate—you!*' well, I turned *sick*. I thought the world had come to an end."

"I tell you what it is," said Henrietta. "I'm sick of that most unremarkable little speech; and now, do be quick; let's put on our clothes and go down to breakfast. We'll have a frolic here or my name is not Henny. Hurrah, here comes Dawson."

"Dawson, me honey,
Take care of your money,
It's all botheration from bottom to top!"

Dawson entered the room very slowly. She did not smile at Henny's words. She was carrying a bundle of clothes and a great jug of hot water. She

laid the water on the wash-hand stand and then collected all the two girls' dirty travelling clothes.

"Ye'll have the goodness to put *these* on," she said, "for this is the uniform of the upper floor of the school. I'll be back in one quarter of an hour to take you both to Discipline, where Miss Joan Pinchin is waiting to start your education. Your breakfast will also be waiting for you there, coffee and bread and butter. Now, not a word, young misses, there's no good whatsoever in complaining at Felicity. What is ordered *has* to be."

She left the room. The girls stared at each other.

"We'd best be quick," said Daisy at last in a breathless sort of voice. "I must say I am in a fright; aren't you?"

"Not quite yet," replied Henny, "but it is coming on. I never could have dreamed of a place like this."

"If only we had left the horse alone," sobbed Daisy.

"It was your thought, remember that," said Henrietta. "Such awful wickedness never occurred to me. Now, stop crying and dress. You will have no eyes left."

CHAPTER XV.

MISS PINCHIN.

SHARP to the minute Dawson reappeared.

"The barber will call about ten," she said.

"The barber? What for?" asked Henny.

"To have your hair cut to the regulation length."

"I won't have my hair touched," said Henny, putting both hands round her fiery locks.

"We'll see about that. Come along; your coffee will be getting cold."

A minute later the girls found themselves in the Chamber of Discipline. There was a table in the centre, and at one end was a tray covered with a white cloth. It contained two large breakfast cups of excellent coffee and two plates piled with thick bread and butter.

"I say, look here, I want jam," said Henny.

"Jam is not given in Discipline," said a harsh and somewhat cracked voice, which so startled the girls that they forgot such a trivial thing as jam, for the words undoubtedly sounded from the lips of the lady who was to instruct them.

She was small, thin and wiry. Her face was an olive tint and very much wrinkled. Her hands were

at once remarkable for their thinness and their strength, and her voice had a peculiarly grating sound.

She introduced herself to the Misses Mostyn with a solemn bow and said, "For a week I am your *only* teacher. Sit down and eat your breakfast, for we are late. You won't have a minute to idle. My name is Pinchin—Miss Pinchin. I am Mrs. Faithful's devoted friend. I rule over Discipline and all those girls who go through its stringent methods. Now, hurry, hurry. Don't slop the coffee into your saucer, Henrietta.—Daisy, eat your bread and butter tidily."

"I wonder," said Henny, speaking suddenly, for Daisy was silent, "did you ever have *all* your plans spoilt just by a streak of light from a dark lantern?"

"That question I refuse to answer. Now, time is up. Daisy, ring the bell for Dawson."

"But we haven't finished yet," said Henrietta.

"Then I'll give you an additional five minutes. But be quick, and no chatter, please."

At the appointed time the girls had eaten sufficient. With the food Daisy's spirits were reviving. She tugged the bell-rope so violently that it came down in her hand.

"For that show of temper," said Miss Pinchin, "you will learn, locked into your bedroom, twenty lines of *Paradise Lost*."

"Never heard of it," whimpered Daisy.

"If you cry, I shall make it forty. Remember, both of you girls, that you are in Discipline—not a

pleasant place—but uncommonly wholesome. Ah, Dawson, send a man to put up that bell-rope again. Remove the breakfast things and send Miss Adelaide Marsh in here.”

“If you please, madam,” said Dawson, “the young ladies’ barber has just called.”

Miss Pinchin’s black eyes gleamed. “Ah, that will do nicely,” she said. “I will take the young ladies into Penitence for the operation.”

“I haven’t made up the room yet, ma’am.”

“I’m sorry for that, but Crew has no eyes for anything but her business.”

Crew, the barber, was a woman therefore. Hateful creature! The girls might have used their eyes to some effect had it been a man, but a woman—they really felt in despair.

“Come, dears,” said Miss Pinchin, “we’ll soon have it over. And you’ll both be so relieved from your masses of untidy hair.”

“But I like my hair; I love it,” said Henny. “It’s the same colour as mumsie’s, poor old mums whose neck was broken. Oh, I say, it is cruel to serve us like this.”

“Now, don’t talk any more nonsense, girls. Besides, after your hair is cut, you’ll only be allowed to speak in French.”

“Then we must be dumb,” said Daisy, “for we don’t know any French.”

“I myself will have the pleasure of instructing you in that elegant language. You will soon know

what is absolutely necessary for your wants. Now, enter your room, dears, for time is getting on."

These headstrong, naughty girls, who had done exactly what they liked at Templemore, now found themselves tongue-tied. A tall, gaunt woman was standing by the little window. In figure she was absolutely flat. Her dress was a dark and ugly shade of brown. In her hand she held a very large pair of scissors. Miss Crew looked absolutely calm and self-possessed. She got Daisy first into her clutches, and having wetted her tangled locks and reduced them to straightness, she proceeded to snip them off just above the shoulders. It was possible for Daisy to keep her hair behind her ears, but all trace of curl had vanished. The last semblance of her poor attempt at beauty had departed with the tangled curly locks.

Henrietta, whose hair was much thicker and richer, strangled a scream. She began to struggle.

"I won't. I say, I *won't!*" she cried.

"You *will*," said Miss Pinchin.

Crew set to work. The same performance took place over Henny's head. For those who admire red hair, she had lovely hair. It was thick and grew in great masses far below her waist. It showed also a far greater mass of curls than did Daisy's.

The brush and the cold water, however, were ruthlessly applied. The prescribed length was carefully measured by Miss Crew and the hair was cut in a

straight line just to touch the shoulders. The golden red hair fell in a mass at the girl's feet.

"The young ladies' hair is naturally very curly," said Miss Crew. "I could, if you wished, madam, apply a pomatum to these heads which would prevent any inclination to curl for some time."

"Then please do," said Miss Pinchin.

The pomatum was used with vigour.

Daisy gave a howl of agony. Henrietta sobbed and sobbed and sobbed.

Miss Pinchin supplied each girl with a very large and coarse pocket-handkerchief.

"Dry your eyes and come to lessons now," she said in a cheerful tone. "You look quite respectable, I do declare. Crew, burn that hair."

"Certainly, Miss Pinchin."

When the two Mostyns and their governess entered Discipline they saw a girl seated by the centre table. She was a dark-eyed girl with an unprepossessing face. Her hair was short just like that of the Mostyn girls, and evidently the same pomatum had been used upon it, for there was not a trace of curl. She was busily employed reading her books and did not take the slightest heed of the Mostyns.

Lessons began. Miss Pinchin sat with her watch before her. She desired first Adelaide, then Henrietta, then Daisy to read a page of Green's *Shorter History of England* aloud. She wasted hardly any words in speech, but when the reading had come to an end, she told Henrietta and Daisy that in future

they would have to read *Little Arthur's History of England*. Then she turned to Adelaide.

"Adelaide, you are improving. I don't praise. I state a fact. Now, for your French, my dears."

Adelaide instantly read a page from a French book.

"Translate it," said Miss Pinchin.

Adelaide did so.

"Now, Henrietta, will you read that page?"

"I can't. I don't know any French."

"Nor can I," said Daisy.

"What a pity! You are likely to be in Discipline for some time. By the way, Adelaide, I have spoken about you to Mrs. Faithful and she thinks you may go to Contrition on Monday next, that is, if there is no falling back."

"I shall like to go to Contrition," said Adelaide.
"The room is so large."

"From there," continued Miss Pinchin, "you will be promoted to that delightful chamber which we call True Repentance, and then, after a short stay in Sweet Patience, you will have the run of the school. You will play in the grounds, your punishment-dress will be removed, and you will sit in Joy, Hope, Faith, and Charity. Thus you will indeed be happy. You will know what Felicity means. You will forget your evil ways and turn over a new leaf."

"And shall *we* have that chance?" burst from Henrietta.

"It is possible," replied Miss Pinchin. "Ah, here comes dinner."

The dinner was quite a good one, hot roast meat, potatoes, vegetables. In addition, a large glass of milk for each girl.

"A quarter of an hour I give you to eat your dinner in," said Miss Pinchin. "Now, pray, do not utter a word. I trust you to Adelaide's care, while I go downstairs to partake of my frugal meal."

The very instant the door was closed behind her, Henrietta and Daisy, with a sort of bound, leaped upon Adelaide.

"Oh, tell us, Addy, me honey, oh, for glory's sake, tell us what awful things are going to take place. Our hair is gone. Our clothes are gone. Our beauteous home is gone. What can be going to happen next?"

The only reply that Adelaide made was to raise her opaque, dark eyes and fix them on the faces of the two girls. Then she began with extreme rapidity to demolish her dinner. When Miss Pinchin re-entered the room, however, Adelaide put into her hand a small piece of paper.

"They have spoken to me four times," she remarked. "I wrote what they said on this piece of paper. You may like to see it."

"Did you speak at all, Adelaide?"

"No, Miss Pinchin, how could I? I hope I am too well-behaved."

"You have acted rightly, but do not allow the

evil weed of self-conceit to take possession of you. Girls," here she turned to the Mostyns, "I am going to take you to Penitence, and lock you in with a copy each of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I have marked the passages you are to learn. I shall now take Adelaide for a brisk walk."

"But may we not go downstairs and play with the other girls?" suddenly burst from Henny's lips.

"You — Penitence girls — Discipline girls! — to dream of any intercourse with those who have left their bonds behind them. Come now, get into Penitence and learn your Milton. I will take you both for a walk after tea, for I have no wish to make you ill, and exercise and fresh air are necessary. Now, Adelaide, put on your bonnet."

Adelaide flew from the room. She put on the funniest little poke bonnet that could well be invented. It was made of coarse grey stuff the same as their dresses, but it was lined with white, and had white strings, which she tied in a neat bow under her chin.

"You are a great comfort to me, Adelaide," said Miss Pinchin, when the girl joined her teacher. "I shall miss you when you go to the Hall of Contrition. Don't you remember how naughty you were when you first came to Discipline. I greatly fear I have a harder task before me in training those Mostyns."

"You are equal to it," said Adelaide. "You are equal to anything." She put her hand inside her

teacher's arm and gave it almost an affectionate squeeze.

"Let's go to the wood and gather flowers," said Adelaide.

"My dear, you forget. Flowers are not allowed in Discipline."

"I'm ever so sorry. Do forgive me."

"You will have flowers, to a small extent, in Contrition," said Miss Pinchin. "Now, let us talk on holy subjects—on the struggles of the soul after righteousness. You have made a grand fight, and, like Christian of old, you are coming out of the Slough of Despond. I think highly of your future, Adelaide, and I feel that I—poor little humble I—have laid the foundation stone."

Adelaide, as was her custom, was quite silent. Miss Pinchin and she walked rapidly, although this part of the day was very hot and there was no shade anywhere. They were both scarlet and dripping with moisture when they returned to Discipline.

"This will do me good," said Adelaide. "It must get some of my wickedness out."

"It will, dear child, bless you. Now, I must attend to the Mostyns. I haven't an instant to spare."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE POWER OF HATRED.

WHILE these things were going on, the Rector of Templemore, a truly unhappy man, was hurrying back as fast as ever he could to his home. He hardly thought at all of the Mostyns. He had left them in very good hands. Jane Faithful was well known to produce extraordinary results. But it was the thought of sending his child, his darling, he might almost say his best beloved, away from him for three long months, which tortured the Rector's brave heart.

How could he live without her? And in addition to the fact of his own loneliness he felt anxious about Maureen. He had left his dear little girl in a queer state of mind. He had left her with an expression on her sweet face which he had never seen there before.

Maureen had had a moral shock; Maureen had had a mental shock. The Rector dreaded he knew not what. Was that lovely nature to be overthrown, was that sweet soul to go down, down in future, instead of soaring up, as the lark rises to his heaven of blue? The Rector could scarcely believe that Felicity was the right place for Maureen, and yet he had promised

to propose the matter to her; and if she agreed to it, to part from his little bright darling for three long months. He felt quite aged and desperately weary.

As he drove up to Templemore on the evening of the second day of his journey, he was met by Dominic. He heard the voices of the other children chattering merrily as they were taken off to bed, but there was no sound of Maureen's voice to greet his ears.

"Father," said Dominic, "there is no use in hiding things. Maureen is gone!"

"My God," said the Rector. He pressed his hand to his heart. It gave him a stab like a knife.

"Don't take on, dad; please don't take on. She has not done anything desperate. She has simply gone away."

"Tell me everything, my son. Are you positive that the—the child is safe?"

"Yes," said Dominic; "there is no mystery about it. She is quite safe."

"Then she has gone to the Colonel," said the Rector in a relieved voice. "Good, I thought she might do that. She is wonderfully fond of 'dear Colonel,' as she calls him."

"No, no; she has not gone to Colonel Herbert. She has certainly been very queer, and although I tried to talk to her and cheer her all I could, she hardly replied and did not take the least interest in anything. Then yesterday morning she came to me with her plans. Her darling little face was as white as death, but terribly determined, and that strange

light which does not come from God, father, was still in her eyes, and it—it sort of haunted me; but she spoke gently, just as she used to speak—the harshness had left her dear voice—it was only, father, that I could not bear to look at her eyes. You know how lovely they used to be. Well, she had settled everything all by herself, and told me that she had sent Garry with Fly-away back to Colonel Herbert. She said she had written a line to him asking him to keep the horse until he heard from her again; and if he never heard, she hoped he would not sell Fly-away. Then she said to me, ‘Dominic, I am not good, and I cannot stay in the house with good people. I may get right again. I don’t feel like it just now; so as I have money enough, I have arranged my plans. You know old Pegeen has a sister called Grace Connor, and she has a little bit of a cabin in the wilds of Kerry. I am going to stay with Grace, who is deaf, and won’t worry me at all, and if ever, ever I feel better, Dominic, you’ll be sure I’ll come flying home. But not now, for I’m not fit for this dear home. Take great care of Uncle Pat. I won’t leave him a message, for I am not, not *good* enough; but *he’ll* understand.’

“Well, father,” continued Dominic, “that’s all; and Pegeen took her herself to Grace Connor, and Pegeen has returned with her eyes almost blinded from crying, for she does so love our Maureen.”

The Rector of Templemore, tired as he was, went straight to the kitchen to interview Pegeen. He

found the poor woman in the deepest distress, but more than inclined to pour out her troubles into the sympathetic ears of her dearly loved master.

"Ah! thin, worra the day, and sorra the day," she sobbed. "But there, masther dear, the wean is safe enough. Grace, own sister to meself, is poor, and mighty poor entirely, but at the very laste, she's clane. Ye could ate yer vittles off the floor, so to shpake; and Grace won't worrit the poor lamb, seeing by the affliction of the Almighty that she is as deaf as a stone."

The Rector thanked Pegeen very kindly, with that gentle courtesy which was his prerogative. He then went into the dining-room and told Dominic what he intended to do.

Owing to the Rector's increase of fortune he was now able to send all his children to first-rate schools, and although Dominic was a little old to enter Rugby, yet the whole thing had been arranged, and by the headmaster's consent he was to stay there for three years, when he hoped to get a good scholarship if possible for his father's own college, Balliol.

The boy was full of talent and loved the thought of the life which stretched before him. He was particularly manly for his age and really looked more than his sixteen years; but when the Rector went on to explain Jane Faithful's remarkable decision, Dominic O'Brien turned a little pale.

"I think we must put off Rugby until after Christmas," he said. "It won't do to leave you alone in

this house, dad. Denis and Kitty will of course go back to school. You will necessarily be alone. I cannot leave you. What is more, I *won't* leave you."

"Good boy," said the Rector. "From what you say you seem to think that Maureen will go to Felicity."

"At the present moment I feel certain she will go," said Dominic, "but of course one cannot be sure of anything. You must let me stay with you, dad."

"Dominic, I cannot! God knows I have done enough to injure my poor children, but now that the chance has arrived, I do not intend to throw your young life away. The headmaster will not let you go to Rugby unless you join at the autumn term. It is all arranged, my lad; pray don't torture me any further."

"I wish I needn't, but I'm afraid I must. I will gladly give up Rugby. You can get me a tutor here and we'll work for a scholarship for old Balliol. I am not so ignorant as you think me, dad; but my first duty is to you."

"Suppose we ask Maureen what she thinks," replied the Rector.

"Ah, well, I'll do what she wishes. But I know what she'll say. Father, you look physically fit to drop. Let me take you to your room."

"I am going to see Maureen by the earliest train to-morrow," said the Rector. "So, perhaps, you are right, my son, and I'd better lie down and try to take what sleep I can."

Unknown to his father, Dominic slipped into Maureen's little bedroom. He even left the door between that room and his father's slightly ajar. Thus he was on the watch, for he was far too anxious to sleep at all that night. But the Rector, worn out with sorrow, slept and had horrible dreams. He was awakened from one, worse than any other, by a light hand touching him on the shoulder, and there stood Dominic with a little tray of tea and bread and butter in his hand.

"You must get up, dear old Gaffer," he said. "The phaeton will be round in less than half an hour. Pegeen has given me full directions as to the whereabouts of her sister's cottage. I am going with you—you know that, of course."

"Yes, Dominic, my boy."

The Rector sipped his tea, which was fragrant and good, ate his bread and butter, and was on the way to Kingsala in time to catch the very first train, which would leave that fashionable and quaint resort at half-past eight in the morning. Dominic secured first-class tickets for himself and his father. They had to endure the usual tiresome wait at the Half-way House, but presently the train from Bradley steamed in, the travellers took their places, and by-and-by, to their great relief, found themselves in the city of Cork.

It was considered a very noble city by Dominic's young eyes, but the Rector had been further afield. He knew what to do now, and exactly how to proceed.

Dominic watched his father intently. He had a time-table in his pocket and discovered that the first train to Mallow, on the Blackwater, did not start until half-past twelve o'clock. At Mallow they would have to change and get into one of the slow-going trains which proceed to Kerry.

"Father," said the boy, "we have lots of time. You've got to eat."

"I did eat. You brought me something to my room."

"A cup of tea and a little bread and butter," replied Dominic. "Oh, dad, I'm awfully hungry. Let's go to Baker's in the Mall and have a right good meal."

The Rector certainly could go hungry himself, not having the slightest appetite, but he would not allow such a proceeding on the part of his son, so to Baker's they went, that shop of great renown, where they had coffee of the richest, and different sorts of slim cakes, cut thin like wafers and buttered hot; and then each partook of a large plate of delicate, pink Limerick ham. It must be owned that the boy enjoyed his food, and it must be owned also that the Rector at least partook of his; whether he tasted it or not is another matter. They then took an outside car and drove to the station, from which, if they so wished, they could take a train to Dublin city, but from which they could also get to Mallow, that most lovely old-world town on the borders of the county

Cork. They passed the swift-flowing waters—well might they be called the Blackwater, so dark and deep, yet clear, were all their depths. They then had a tiresome wait for a train for Kerry.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOME OF SILENCE.

IF Maureen O'Brien had one thing to be thankful for at the present moment, it was the fact that Grace Connor was at once very old and very deaf. She would have done anything in the world for the child, who was put into her care by Pegeen; but the two, so strangely brought together, were prohibited from speaking to each other; and the queer silence of the place, and the rough but sure cleanliness had a soothing effect on Maureen's troubled breast. She need not ask Grace anything; she need not speak to her at all.

On the morning after her arrival, she put on a shabby little hat and prepared to go out. Seeing her about to do so, Grace called aloud in her cracked voice:

"Whist, a minute, honey asthore, ye'll be wanting your vittles. Come in when it plazes ye; the door's on the latch day and night."

Grace darted into a little sort of pantry which she possessed, and soon brought out a tiny basket filled with slices of bread and butter and a bottle of creamy milk. The girl nodded by way of thanks.

She then went away. She walked far, for she wanted to get very tired. She was in a strange, new country, a country of mighty grandeur, of solemn peaks, of deep, deep dales, a country of rushing waters, of the greenest of moss and of flowers—a country unlike any that Maureen had ever dreamed of. Maureen was in no mood to go into raptures about anything then, however. She saw a peak in the distance—a peak of one of the many mountains—by no means one of the highest, but still not too high to prevent her from climbing to the top of it. This peak became her goal. She made for it, and soon, all too soon, she left the moss and the green, green grass of the emerald isle behind her, and found herself confronted by solid rock, which rose up in all directions in the shape of huge boulders.

Here there was not a scrap of vegetation, nothing but rock, hard and stony; but the highest boulder led to the top of the peak, and she would get there or die in the attempt. Up there she would be alone, alone with her trouble; perhaps God would come back to her! Perhaps the wicked, terrible angels would forsake her. Those fiery spirits of the pit might retire from this solitary grandeur; at least Maureen felt that she could fight her battle best on the top of the peak.

So she went on and on. She was naturally almost as good a climber as she was a horsewoman, and step by step, slowly but surely, she attained her object. Half-way up she felt very hot and very

thirsty. She opened her bottle of milk and took a draught. This refreshed her. She went on her way again. At last—at long last—towards evening she had reached the eminence of this great peak of Desolation. She sat down on the jagged ridge of rock and gazed around her. Mountains everywhere—Great Tork with his nightcap on; Mangerton, and many others. Mountains, nothing but mountains. Her little peak, which looked so mighty from below, seemed small and insignificant now that she had reached it, but the sight that met her view was not only that of mountains—it was also that of lakes. One lake mingling with another and yet again with another, and from some of the mountains tumbled and roared great waterfalls sounding as loud as avalanches in Switzerland. In the far, far distance Maureen could just catch a glimpse of a mighty gorge, which is well known as the Gap of Dunlow.

Maureen sat very still. She was unhappy, but not quite so unhappy as she had been at Templemore. She had a queer sensation over her as though the Wicked Angels, those horrors of the Pit, who had entered into her breast were waiting for her at the bottom of the peak. But she knew also that they could not get up here, for God and His Holy Angels dwelt here. She began to wonder that God should allow one like her—so terribly full of wickedness—to sit on the top of the solitary peak.

She stretched out her arms with a strong and ex-

ceeding bitter cry. "Forgive me! Forgive me! Take the hatred out of me. Dear Lord God, merciful Saviour, take the hatred out of Maureen. Oh, I cannot—I cannot live long with hatred in my heart!"

Then it seemed to her that as she prayed and flung herself in her despair on the hard bosom of the rock, a Voice said to her—a Voice exceedingly strong and gentle—"Arise and live!"

She started to her feet in sudden alarm. Was there anyone near? Was it possible that one of God's angels had come close to her. "Arise and live!" said the Voice again. "Know well that those who sin and repent are forgiven. Their sins are blotted out for evermore. Be of good comfort. Live your life."

Then all of a sudden it seemed to Maureen that a spell of most wonderful peace visited her, that the agony of the last few days died away, never to return. Hers was indeed no ordinary nature. It was full of depths of passion, of undying love. To find that Hate had taken up his abode in such a heart as hers was indeed agony. But now the child knew that the awful thing called Hatred had left her for ever.

She wiped two or three scalding drops from her eyes and fell sound asleep on the summit of the rock. She slept for a long time, for she had not slept at all the night before, and when she came to herself she was startled and amazed at her position; also at what had taken place, and at the complete change within

her. She no longer hated those poor Mostyns; she pitied them. She felt that in the greatness of her love, it could even encompass them, and take them in. She was very stiff and tired, however, and she perceived to her perplexity that the day had completely gone, and that she was alone on the peak, in the night, with the stars shining down on her and the great black guardian forms of the other mountains surrounding her. She felt strangely, wonderfully at peace.

She must get back to Grace Connor. She looked in vain for her little basket, but it had rolled away long ago into a chasm beneath her feet. It would be extremely difficult for Maureen to find her way back from this dangerous peak even in the day-time, but at night it was impossible. She did not know a step of the road; she was also exceedingly weak and giddy for want of food. She stooped down suddenly and pressed her lips on the hard rock. "The Place where God Himself delivered me," she murmured to herself, and then she smiled, her old bright happy smile, and the old lovely light returned to her eyes.

She stood up, a slim young figure, but graceful and tall withal, on this eternal summit, and she stretched out her arms wider and sang in her glorious voice:

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The Blood of Jesus whispers Peace within.
Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' Bosom naught but calm is found.



She stretched out her arms wider and sang in her glorious voice.—Page 204.

"Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the Throne."

The echoes all around took up the sweet true voice.
It ceased, and there followed a stillness, then again
the girl sang:

"Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy Strength, and Christ thy Right;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally.

"Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His Face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

"Faint not, nor fear, His Arms are near,
He changeth not, and thou art dear;
Only believe, and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee."

As the last words echoed and rebounded from peak to peak a young voice from below shouted, "Hullo, Maureen, hullo, darling! I'm coming, I'm coming! Stay where you are until I reach you, mavourneen."

A few minutes later Dominic had clasped Maureen, his Maureen of old, in his arms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PEAK OF DESOLATION WHERE GOD WAS.

THE Rector paced up and down in front of Grace Connor's little cabin. The Rector's heart was sorely burdened. The stars in their courses, the moon as she came up in the heavens, had no effect upon him. Dominic had gone in search of Maureen. It was impossible to say a word to Grace. Her deafness was of that stony sort that no words could break. She lived in a world of silence—a world of silence absolute and complete.

Grace Connor was not an unhappy old woman. The Silences around her, the Everlasting Hills which surrounded her, gave to this withered old body a strange sensation of peace. She saw immediately that the Rector was troubled, but it was impossible for her to help him. She therefore did not try. She looked at Dominic with the admiration all women had for the brave lad, and when he spoke of Maureen, hoping that his clear young voice would penetrate through the unbroken stillness, she understood him sufficiently to point outwards, and to smile in a vague and yet comforting manner. Then she busied herself, preparing all she could in the way of refresh-

ments for the Rector, the young maid, and the boy.

Pegeen had provided her with eatables and with money to buy more. In her early days Grace had also been quite a famous cook, so now she prepared eggs and bacon and she made coffee in her ancient coffee pot, coffee of the very best description. She laid her little table with a snowy but coarse cloth, and put the coffee on the hob to keep hot, and then she waited with folded hands. She was accustomed to waiting, she had waited for so many long years now. She saw the Rector pace backwards and forwards outside the cabin. She herself personally was not at all troubled. She was sure the young maid would soon come back, but she could not convey this certainty which dwelt in her mind to Mr. O'Brien, for it was only very occasionally she spoke. In fact she had *almost* lost the power of speech in that stony silence in which she dwelt. She stood and contemplated her own work, her spotless kitchen, nothing forgotten, for the welfare of the hungry wanderers. They would soon be here; she was certain on that point.

But the Rector was not certain. His troubles affected him in a most intense way. A kind of black sorrow had descended on him, the like of which he had never even imagined. As the night grew darker the feelings in his breast became more intense. Suddenly, as they reached a certain pitch of untold agony, the deaf old woman came up and touched him on the sleeve. Her eyes were very bright, and her face full of unfathomable peace.

"Masther," she said, "*pray!* 'Our Father,' masther."

In an instant the Rector was on his knees, tears were streaming from his eyes. He prayed aloud the prayer of all prayers, and it seemed as though Grace understood him, for she joined her words to his in a kind of rapture. Her cracked old voice sounding the note of hope through life's despair.

The moment the prayer had come to an end, the old woman went back into the cottage and began busily preparing the supper. To judge by her movements, she seemed not to have a moment to lose; time was hurrying her on, forcing her forward; she broke the new-laid eggs into the frying pan and put the bacon with them. She knew her cooking would be good of the good; and while she was so busy the Rector walked a little farther and saw clearly through the summer night two figures coming to meet him—a boy and a girl. The boy's strong young hand and arm were round the girl's waist. They were walking very quickly. Suddenly the girl saw the Rector, made one quick bound away from her companion, and in a flash of time, was at the Rector's side. Her arms were round his neck and her eyes, sweet as of old, but now also triumphant, were looking into his.

"Uncle Pat—Uncle Pat—I left the evil things at the bottom of the Peak of Desolation, and the dear beloved God has come back to me, and his angels have kissed Maureen, and Maureen is happy—oh so

happy again. Uncle Pat, do you know I am desperately hungry!"

"My child!" said the Rector. He could scarcely breathe for a minute, from a sense of exhaustion and relief; then Grace's face appeared at the door of the cabin.

"Supper," she muttered; and she disappeared within.

Was there ever in all the wide world a meal enjoyed like that meal, for all three were faint with exhaustion, and the old smile was in Maureen's eyes—the old smile, but altered. It was a smile of triumph now as well as joy. She had gone through her severe battle, and come out rejoicing.

That night the Rector and the two children slept as best they could in Grace's cabin. She herself disappeared; nobody knew where she went; she left them the little cabin to themselves. She went out, leaving everything in spotless order.

"*Breakfast—marning—seven,*" she remarked, and then she vanished.

Maureen was herself, yet not her old self, but at least she was her old self in her tender care for others. She insisted on Uncle Pat and Dominic lying down side by side on the deaf old woman's bed, and she herself put a pillow under her head and lay on the floor in the kitchen. Thus the short remainder of the night passed.

Early in the morning a breakfast very similar to

supper was prepared by Grace with the help of Maureen. Grace gazed very hard at the child.

"Ye've got a differ on ye," and she pointed to her own two eyes.

Maureen nodded.

"It war the mountains," said Grace.

Maureen nodded again.

Immediately after breakfast, the Rector paid the old woman a handsome sum for her services, and he, Maureen, and Dominic went back to Templemore. Maureen was quiet and pale, but the happy light still filled her eyes, and nothing else mattered. Nothing else truly, although the Rector knew he had a task before him. He had got his darling back; she was safe. The awful shock to her reason was averted, but, yes, according to his promise, he must lose her or give her the opportunity of leaving him.

When they got to Templemore, Maureen rushed into the kitchen and hugged Pegeen.

"Look in my eyes, Pegeen," she said.

"Glory be to the Vargin," said Pegeen, "I thought mayhap it might be so, and now ye'll look afther the mather, blessed man."

"Of course," replied the child.

As she went from the kitchen to the dining-room, she sang a few lines of that glorious song, too well known to be repeated—"My heart is like a singing-bird."

She saw Dominic and his father anxiously talking

together. She went and stood in front of them, her whole face lit up with sweetness.

"Oh, Dominic," said the Rector, "I feel as if I couldn't do it."

"Father dear, you must—you know you must."

"Well, then, leave us alone, lad. I can do it best when Maureen and I are alone."

Maureen looked in astonishment at the man and the boy, then she drew a chair close to her Uncle's side.

"Must I—*must* I talk of the dreadful past?" she asked.

"No, my sweet, my own. It is of the future I have to converse with you."

"Something is troubling you, Uncle Pat."

"A good bit, mavourneen."

"Well," said Maureen, "had we not better have it out? It will be off your mind then, and rest assured of one thing, that nothing can make Maureen unhappy now."

"You blessed darling. But *I* fear still, Maureen, I am a selfish old man, and I—I don't want to part with you."

Maureen did turn a trifle paler than usual.

"Part with me?" she said.

"Yes, that's the trouble. Now listen! Give me your dear little hand to hold."

Maureen immediately put both of her hands into the Rector's.

"Now speak, Uncle Pat."

“Well, my darling, it’s this. I took the Mostyns away from here after their evil behaviour. I did not tell you where I was taking them, but I knew of a certain school in the midland counties of England, which is kept by a relation of mine. Her name is Jane Faithful, and she has as a rule a little over forty girls in her school. It is a school where naughty and troublesome girls have been sent from time to time, and from time to time have returned to those who belonged to them, completely altered—in short, penitent. I don’t know what her system is, but I imagine that at least at first it is somewhat severe. I took the girls to her school and told her their whole story, then she made a strange request. She said she had often naughty girls in her school, but none to compare with the Mostyns for badness, for cruelty and downright wickedness. She said she would *not* undertake these girls unless *you*—*you*, Maureen—went to her for three months. She would treat you, my child, as an honoured guest and take every care of you; and I—I was broken-hearted, but I told her that if you consented I would not say nay. Maureen, I would let you go. This is an awful trouble to me, my colleen.”

“Why, Uncle Pat,” cried Maureen. “Isn’t it just perfectly glorious. Now I have my chance. I can fold my love round those poor girls. They shall get inside my heart of hearts. Oh, Uncle Pat, this is indeed a sign that God has forgiven me. Uncle Pat, darling, I am more than glad to go. How could

I do otherwise? Having *hated*—oh, *how* I hated—do I not now equally love? Write to that lady at once, Uncle Pat, to say I'm coming, and three months will pass swiftly, and who knows but I may bring them back to you, changed and altered in all respects."

"Maureen, I haven't a word to say. Of course you must go, dearest. This is the will of God."

"Shall I go to-morrow?" asked Maureen. "We might send a wire to-night."

"So soon, child of my love?"

"Yes, Uncle Pat; for they want me even more than you do; and, what's more, you are not to come with me."

"I must. You are not to take that long journey alone."

"Dom will take me. Dom is a splendid traveller, but now there is a great deal to do. May I find Dom? I want to speak to him."

Dominic, who was lingering restlessly about, not far from the bed of periwinkles, was quickly by Maureen's side.

"So the father has told you, Maureen."

"Yes, and of course I'm going, Dom, but he, he must not travel any more. He's just played out. I want you to take me to that school, Dom, dear old boy; but first I want to write a note to 'dear Colonel,' and we can send it by one of the grooms. He must wait for an answer. Then I wish to send a wire

to-night to Mrs. Jane Faithful, to tell her I am going."

"You are in a great hurry to leave us, Maureen."

The girl looked at her cousin rather sadly.

"After all, even *you* don't quite understand," she said. "How can I leave *them* in misery a day longer if I can help it."

"But you——" began the boy.

Maureen's little hand closed his lips.

"Don't say the word—don't—don't. Only I will tell you now that by the exceeding greatness of my *hatred* so also is the depth and passion of my love."

"You are like no one else, Maureen," said Dominic.

He went away soberly and gravely. He had not ventured to tell Maureen, in her present mood, that he was obliged on account of this arrangement to give up Rugby for good, that those glorious years of schoolboy life in one of the greatest public schools were to be denied him. He knew well, only too well, that it was impossible for his father to be left alone. Well, it could not be helped.

But Maureen was looking at him with an intense light in her eyes.

"Boykins, what's troubling ye, avick?"

"Oh, nothing, darling, nothing."

"Boy, there is. Out with it to Maureen this minute."

"It's only this. I'm just so beastly selfish. I did so want to go to Rugby, and the Headmaster says

he will not take me unless I join the school at the autumn term, which is close at hand now. I felt somehow as though it was *such* a golden chance. I can't help saying it, Maureen; I did look forward to it. But I ask you, dearest and best, can I leave the old man alone with his trouble—alone, quite alone—with only servants to see after him?"

"To be sure, you can't; it would be impossible," said Maureen. "Look here, Dom, somehow I feel in riotous spirits. I won't write that letter to 'dear Colonel.' I'll go to see him instead."

"I don't pretend to understand you, Maureen."

"You must have patience, boykins. Can I have any kind of trap? Otherwise I'll walk."

"Yes, I think I can get you a trap," said Dominic.

"Then say nothing to your father; but get it quickly."

Soon Maureen, accompanied by one of the grooms, was seated in a shabby little two-wheeled cart and was herself driving a rough colt over the country roads towards Rathelaren.

Now if there was a miserable man to be found in a beautiful place at that moment, it was "dear Colonel." Maureen's letter, the return of the horse, and the groom, had completely upset him. He refused his food, he could not eat, he dared not make inquiries, for the little letter seemed, somehow, very sacred, but his heart was broken up with longing for the child and with undefined fears for her safety. As to Fly-away, never was a small, high-spirited

Arab so petted and fussed over. The Colonel could not make enough of him. His white oats were the whitest in the country, his hot mash the most tempting, his loose box was the perfection of a loose box, and as to Garry the groom, he had a royal time in the kitchen, telling the other servants over and over again of the mysteries of that awful night when "herself, the little wicked 'un she was, tried to pison Fly-away, and would have succeeded but for a sthreak of light coming up through the boards."

"Mayhap it was the Vargin sent the light," said the cook.

"No, no, woman, I'm not superstitious. It was the dark lantern that caused the light. My word, she is a cunnin' wan."

The kitchen greatly enjoyed the adventure, and Garry, handsome and gay, was more fascinating than ever, more welcome than ever, with his merry eyes and cheery laugh. But then came the horrible news that Miss Maureen had gone away, no one knew where, and the Colonel was off his feed *entirely*, and his valet was certain that the Colonel never slept o' nights, but that he was on the fret the whole day and night. "And ef the round of the sun took forty-eight hours he'd still be on the fret," said Terence, the valet. "This sort o' thing will kill the Colonel. My word! I don't know what to make of it."

"Ate your mate and stop talking horrors," said the cook. "I declare what wid *this*, and wid *that*,

and Garry and the hoss coming back as they did, I feel sort o' creepy. I'm not going to lose *my* night's rest, me good man, so ye'd best drop the dismals, for they don't suit me complaint at all, at all."

It was while the servants were talking in this manner in the hall and Mrs. MacGill was wondering in what sort of manner she could tempt the Colonel's appetite, that the sound of wheels was heard outside. The next minute Garry gave a sort of screech, and Maureen said, "Mind this little horse, Garry. I want to see the Colonel."

"He is in his study, missie asthore. Heaven be praised to see your swate face. Oh, but it's I that am mighty glad."

Maureen held out her little hand, grasped Garry's for a moment, and then said in her old cheerful voice, "I must see Fly-away, by-and-by." The next moment she had burst into the Colonel's study without knocking.

She had dressed herself neatly and prettily. The shabby clothes in which she had gone away were discarded. The day was a hot one, and she was all in white with a little white hat trimmed with soft white ribbons. Nothing could be simpler than her dress—no face more charming than hers.

The Colonel gave a sort of gasp.

"Maureen," he said, "Maureen!"

She ran to him and flung her arms round his neck.

"Dear, *dear* Colonel, I've come back. Everything

is all right. All things are beautiful in this beautiful world. Some day perhaps when I am fit to tell it, I will relate my story to my own Colonel, but for the present I would rather ask you to trust Maureen."

"My blessed child, I always trust you; but your letter gave me great pain."

"Ah, *that* letter," said Maureen, and she gave a little shudder. "Colonel, I love you very, very much, and I want you to keep Garry and Fly-away for three months, then I rather expect I'll want them both back again. But I want you to do something more than that for me. Will you? Promise!"

"You blessed child, I never promise in the dark."

"Well, it shan't be in the dark; it shall be in the light. You know that broth of a boy Dominic is going to Rugby. It's a bit late for him to go, and if he misses this term, the Headmaster won't have him, but he'll have to miss this term and Rugby altogether unless *you* come to the rescue."

"Good gracious, Maureen, what have I to do with it?"

"Well it's like this. We can't leave Uncle Pat alone; he's not accustomed to it, and he has gone through a frightful lot lately, so I want you, 'dear Colonel,' out of all your wealth (and you know you are *very* rich) to put a good curate into Templemore, and take Uncle Pat with you, when the weather gets cold enough, to the Riviera, and until then to have him here, if you both like, or to take him at once

to parts of Europe which he has never seen and would like to, beyond the beyonds! I want you to be with him while I am away. Will you do this *great* thing for your own little Maureen?"

"Well, to be sure, child, it is a great thing, and I am a bit tired of travelling, and I like my own comforts and my own home, but I'd do more than that for your sweet face. Bless you, my little girl. If there's a great hurry over this business, we'll have the motor car out and go straight to the Rectory this evening. Upon my word, I'm hungry. You know the ways of this house, Maureen. Ring the bell, my best darling."

When Terence appeared with such startling swiftness that there was circumstantial evidence that he must have had his ear to the keyhole, the Colonel looked him up and down very shrewdly.

"Under the *circumstances*, I forgive you, Terence," he said; "but clearly understand, *don't* do it again. Now, pray listen. Miss Maureen and I want dinner quite simple at *once*, and in half an hour from now I desire Laurence, my chauffeur, to have the motor car at the front entrance. Now hurry, please, for there is not a moment to lose."

"Cert'ly, Colonel," was the valet's response. He fled to the kitchen.

"Now, of all the wonders," he said, "that blessed man our Colonel has got and gone and started an *appetite*. It's dinner for *two*, and not a holy minute's delay. It's not by yer lave! but the thing has

to be—Dinner—‘sharp, and look alive’ war his orders; and what’s more—him what never goes out towards evening, which I take it to be the werry glory o’ the day—the motor car is to be at the front door all ready for a drive for himself and Missie—bless her heart.”

“For Heaven’s sake, don’t stand gapin’ there!” cried cook. “Give a body a chance, wull ye, ye omorthorn. You and yer creepy stories indade, and for sure! Now let me prepare a male fit to ate for the nicest gintleman in the whole of ould Ireland.”

So Maureen and the Colonel ate together, and the Colonel drank two glasses of soft delicious wine, and he insisted on Maureen having a tiny glass to keep him company; then they were off and away for Templemore.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LOVE THAT PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.

THERE are certain people born into the world, apparently quiet and unassuming, really modest and without any apparent self-confidence, who yet manage to rule all those with whom they come in contact. There are not many of these gracious souls, but they dawn now and then on the world and little Maureen O'Brien happened to be one of these lovely and most gracious personalities. Her agony, untold, unspeakable, when she forgot herself and gave way to what she, poor little love, thought sin of the deepest dye, has been fully described. Afterwards she saw the Face of her loving Father again, her Heavenly Father. The Good Angels came back to her, the Bad Angels departed, and she was as busy as the busiest honey-bee in making arrangements for all possible wants of those people whom she considered her own.

It was unspeakably strange how a little girl like Maureen could influence a great manly boy like Dominic, but it was much stranger how she could compel the Rector and the Colonel to follow her will. She did it with such extreme gentleness that she contrived to make both these men feel that it

was their own desire, that they *themselves* personally had longed for this arrangement. "Dear Colonel" cheered up and clapped his hands as he discussed their foreign tour with the Rector. The Rector declared that it was the unspoken dream of his life to see these lovely places. The Colonel happened to know the very young man who could come to Templemore as *locum tenens*; in fact the matter was arranged from end to end before these two elderly men parted that night; and Maureen stood by, smiling gently at both, and never uttering a syllable. It was to be *their* idea; it *was* their idea. This is the fashion of the Maureens of the world.

"Dominic would of course go to Rugby; why, whatever should prevent the lad?" cried the Colonel, "when I have been panting for the Italian lakes, and to go from there on to the Riviera, and only waiting because I couldn't get a friend like yourself to come with me, old man."

"And I," replied the Rector, "have dreamed of those places full of glory, but I never thought to see them."

"You'll see them now with a vengeance," said the Colonel; "and we have no time to spare. Tom Fagan—first rate chap, Tom—can take on the duties of your parish at once. You may as well come back with me to Rathclaren when I call for you to-morrow after Maureen has gone."

"Ah, my little Maureen," said the Rector.

He looked at the child with his eyes full of sym-

pathy, but she saw well enough, for the time at least, that she was no longer first with him. The Grand Tour came first. The dream of his life, about to be realised at long last, *was* first for the time being. So little Maureen went off with a light heart on the following morning.

Pegeen, it is true, cried a good deal, but the Rector did not cry. His eyes were bright with renewed health. Burke also looked very mournful; but they both promised the little girl to do their utmost for Mr. Fagan, God bless him, "and they would kape the ould house like a new pin, God bless *it!*"

So Maureen went away. Her heart was indeed like a feather. Dominic was very near chortling in his joy; Dominic had read well enough how cleverly, how marvellously Maureen had managed.

"Upon my word," he said, "I don't know myself, little mate; I can be a Rugby boy with an easy mind after all."

"Of course you can, Dom, and be sure you write to me. Dear Colonel has promised to write from every place they stop at—if it is only a picture-card—and Uncle says he will write on Sundays. Oh, Dom, *don't* they look happy, *dear* old men."

"They're 'chortling,' if you like," replied Dominic.

So the boy and girl started on their journey. They crossed from Rosslair to Fishguard, and then took train to London. Dominic was very anxious to

spend one night in London, but Maureen would not allow this.

"No," she said, "no. *They* are crying for me very hard. We'll go straight on."

"Who in the world are crying for you, asthore?"

"Why, those two poor weans. It is lovely to be wanted," said Maureen.

"I thought you——" began Dominic.

"Don't say the words, Dom. For a short and most awful time there was a wicked Spirit in me, but he died at the bottom of the Peak of Desolation, and in his place there entered"—Maureen's eyes, lovely indeed now, were fixed on her companion—"the Angel of all Charity, of all Forgiveness, of Love, Love Divine. Don't let's talk any more, Dom. I'm sleepy."

She curled up close to her cousin-brother, and with her head on his shoulder dropped asleep.

Now it so happened that things were not going on at all well in Felicity. Hitherto, Jane Faithful, by the aid of Miss Pinchin and some other choice teachers, had managed her little flock with, on the whole, marked success. But the Mostyns were different from any other girls who had ever come to Felicity. The Mostyns were hopelessly rebellious. The Mostyns, after the first couple of days, began to break rules and defy punishment. Miss Pinchin, clever and stern as she was, became almost afraid of the girl who had all but poisoned the horse, while

Henrietta spent her entire nights in screaming, shrieking, and crying.

Daisy at last became dull and stupid, but Henrietta was decidedly reckless. She managed to get out of her small window and to sit on the extremely narrow ledge and dangle her feet in the air and shout to each girl who passed, "Hullo! who are you? I'm Henny-penny, and I'm in prison for nothing at all."

Then there came a day when Daisy refused to get up. She said it was not worth while. Her face had a terribly dull and vacant expression. Henny in despair pulled her out of bed, but she dropped in a dead, senseless lump on the floor. She had really fainted. Then Henny got out again on to the window ledge in her nightdress and, poised on this dangerous spot, shrieked the information to all who could hear that Daisy 'was *kilt entirely*,' and that Faithful had better send for a doctor or she would hang by the neck until she died.

This terrible information brought Dawson with Miss Pinchin, and last, but by no means least, Jane Faithful, on the scene. The girl, Daisy, was lying in a dead heap on the floor.

"I'd have put her back in bed," said Henny, "but she's too heavy. One of ye cruel ones catch her by the legs, and the other lift her round the shoulders. She's dead as sure as I'm alive. Nice sort of school this to send respectable girls to!"

"Oh, my dears, my dears," said poor Mrs. Faith-

ful. She was in many ways a severe woman, but she had a truly kind heart. She bent over the white, unconscious girl and asked Miss Pinchin in a decidedly angry voice what she could have done to bring the girl to that pass.

"I can't manage her," replied Miss Pinchin. "I will own it to you, dearest friend. Daisy Mostyn and her sister are the first two occupants of this happy school whom I have failed to train. Henrietta is a trifle easier to manage than her sister, but Daisy will not eat nor speak. I have tried severity; I have tried everything."

"Have you tried *kindness*?" asked Mrs. Faithful.

"Kindness!" said Miss Pinchin. "Kindness in the Hall of Discipline?"

"Ah," said Jane Faithful, "even there. It's an ennobling influence. You have indeed failed, Joan Pinchin. Henrietta, get dressed at once and come with me."

"No; I don't intend to leave my sister," said Henrietta.

"Well, stay where you are and I will have your breakfast sent up to you, but I must see immediately about getting a doctor for this poor little girl. I trusted her to you, Joan Pinchin. I never saw *such* a change in any face."

"She's dying, if you want to know," said Henrietta. "She's going pop, like poor mumsie did. You won't catch *me* leaving her; only I would like to see *you*, old Faithful, whipping that horrid Pinchin."

"Don't talk in such an intemperate way, Henrietta. Joan, come with me. Dawson, I will send Annie Anderson to look after these children, and you will have the goodness to put on your bonnet and cloak without a moment's delay and fetch Dr. Halsted."

"Oh my word!" gasped Dawson; but Mrs. Faithful was one to be obeyed.

Joan Pinchin and Dawson left the room, and almost at the same moment a rosy-cheeked girl, with blue eyes, and golden hair twined round her head, entered the Chamber of Penitence. Her hair, her eyes, her complexion, made her look all sunshine. She was dressed in the garb of a nurse, very simply and neatly.

"Oh, poor, poor little one," she said. "Miss Henrietta, you must get your clothes on, or you'll catch your death of cold."

"But that's what I want," said Henrietta. "I'm sick of life!"

"Oh my dear, you oughtn't to say that. Think of our dear, dear Mrs. Faithful."

"Upon my word, she's not dear to *me*," said Henrietta. "But I rather take to you; and it was perfectly lovely to hear her pounding it into old Pinchin, and that abominable Dawson. Why, Dawson simply *dripped* tears as she went away. What is your name, Goldilocks?"

"I'm called Nurse Annie, dear."

"Do you think my sister will die?"

"I hope not, dear; but *you* certainly will, unless you put on some more clothes than your nightdress."

"Well," said Henny-penny after a pause, "I suppose I may as well rig myself out. I feel somehow as though there was going to be a bit of fun again—only *what* an ugly uniform they do wear in this school, Goldilocks! I had glorious hair, much handsomer than yours. It was the colour of the sunset, and they cut it all off, and pomatumed it."

"What a pity!" said Nurse Annie; "but it will grow again, my dear."

"Did you really say 'what a pity!'? Then I *quite* like you. I'll dress like a flash of greased lightning. It doesn't matter about washing, does it? For I know I'll be crying most of the day."

"Now, my dear, you won't be so silly, for it will be bad for your sister."

"Oh, Daisy, she's as good as gone," said Henrietta. "She was taken sudden, like poor mumsie. She was a nice little thing, and the *imp* of mischief. Pinchin and Dawson and the barber killed her. Whatever you may say about the woman called Faithful, she had a hand in that pie."

"Dress yourself now and stop talking," said Nurse Annie. "There is plenty of cold water in that jug and you really *must* wash, for your face is such a show."

"To be sure now, is it, at all, at all? I don't like being a holy show. People like me best when I am

pretty. Mumsie used to say I was a very handsome girl."

"You are quite decent-looking now," said the nurse, "if only you wouldn't talk so much, and would begin your washing and dressing before the doctor arrives. As to your sister, she is no more dead than I am. See, her eyes are wide open; she is looking at you. She only fainted, poor little dear."

"Oh, get out of my way; let me hug her," said Henny. "Daisy—*Dysy*—give me your answer do!"

"Young lady, you are not to go near your sister. She is much too weak."

Daisy certainly gave a very weak, wondering smile.

"Where am I?" she said. "Who is this? Oh, I'm not good, so it can't be heaven. Where am I?"

"Have this wee sip of brandy and water, my dear," said Nurse Annie. She combed out the girl's stiff locks, stiff from the effects of the odious pomatum.

Henrietta started for a minute, then she dashed cold water out of a large enamel jug into a large enamel basin, and proceeded to duck her head and face in.

"The horrid stuff won't come off," she said.

"I'll get it off for you presently, if you are a good girl," said Nurse Annie. "Now get on with your dressing."

Henrietta flew into her hideous clothes. In less than a quarter of an hour there came a tap at the

Chamber of Penitence, and a grave, elderly woman, whom Nurse Annie addressed as Dinah, laid a tray full of all kinds of good things on the dressing-table.

Here was coffee worth drinking; here were rolls and new-laid eggs, butter, and cream and jam.

Henny fell upon the food like a little wolf. Nurse Annie tried to coax Daisy to eat, but she only shook her weak little head and rejected all offers of nourishment.

Henny felt wonderfully refreshed by the time Dr. Halsted arrived. He was a young-looking man of between thirty and forty years of age. He had keen, grey eyes, a clever, clean-shaven face, and dark hair cut very short and mixed with grey. He did not take the least notice of Henny, but devoted himself to Daisy. He examined the girl most carefully, took her temperature, felt her pulse, did all the usual things, then said she was suffering from shock and must be sent immediately into the school hospital or infirmary, which at that time happened to be empty. Nurse Annie must look after her day and night until he got a second nurse to relieve her. He would send one in as soon as possible.

Nurse Annie knew her post too well to trouble the doctor with questions, and his own directions were extremely simple. The girl was to be kept absolutely quiet. She was not to be allowed to talk to anyone. He would send in a temperature chart and her temperature was to be taken every four hours; then Dr.

Halsted, without even glancing at Henny, who thought herself attractive with her freshly washed face, left the room and went down to speak to Mrs. Faithful.

"That little girl is very ill," he said. "I cannot imagine what is the matter with her. I don't apprehend anything infectious. It strikes me she is suffering pretty considerably from what is called 'shock.' When did she come to your admirable school, dear madam?"

"Nearly a week ago," replied Mrs. Faithful. "Her step-father brought both her and her sister. She certainly had been exceedingly naughty, and I felt obliged to put her under Miss Pinchin's care. Miss Pinchin, as a rule, manages *extremely* naughty girls perfectly, but she has not contrived well either for this poor child or her sister."

"Oh, there are two of them."

"Yes; the other has red hair. I did not wish to take the girls at all. The one with red hair was in the room whilst you were examining your patient. But my cousin and friend, Mr. O'Brien, begged of me to do what I could for these girls, who are his step-daughters. I promised *on a condition*, and am waiting anxiously to know if this condition will be fulfilled, otherwise, as soon as ever the girl is well, she will have to leave the school."

"If ever she *gets* well," said Dr. Halsted.

"Oh, doctor, you don't think so badly of her as all that?"

“But I do. To start with, she has little or no constitution, and, whatever naughtiness she has committed, she has deliberately starved herself. I’m afraid your governess-assistant was too severe. Of course I’ll do my best for the girl, and come again in the middle of the day. By the way, I must send in another nurse—two if you like—for she is likely to be highly delirious. Meanwhile Nurse Annie will look after her. She cannot be moved into the infirmary until a good fire is lighted and the room made fresh and snug. That was not a nice bedroom she and her sister were in. I propose to change everything. Your infirmary is always charming. Have a few flowers about, but not those that smell. Put the bed so that she can see out of the window if she feels inclined, and have soft green blinds, which I know you possess, put up to all the windows in the room. I by no means give up *hope*, Mrs. Faithful, but the case is very serious.”

The doctor went on his way and in that house of absolute order, of absolute peace, there was, for the time at least, considerable excitement.

Poor Miss Pinchin cried her small beady eyes out of her head. Dawson felt thoroughly offended, but Mrs. Faithful was the sort of woman who, when she took the reins, took them with a will. How she did long for the little girl the Rector had spoken of! The week was very nearly up, and she had not had a line. Still she had great faith in the Rector, and was certain Maureen would come, or a message would

arrive, before the week was quite up. Then she ordered her servants. She set her schoolgirls to their tasks, and with her own hands helped to get the Infirmary into absolute order.

She also had a fire lit in the Chamber of Peace, that room which she so hoped Maureen would occupy.

The Infirmary was soon quite ready. It was a spacious apartment, with no ornaments of any kind, and a highly polished floor. A little white bed was arranged near the window with the prettiest view, but all the windows now on this hot day were rendered cool and soothing by soft green blinds. Then Daisy was most carefully wrapped up and carried into the Infirmary. The poor child was absolutely unconscious. Henny followed her, sobbing loudly.

"Henrietta, dear," said Mrs. Faithful, "I cannot allow you to stay with your sister while you make this distressing noise; and whatever have they done to your head, my child?"

"It was that *beast* of a Pinchin," said Henrietta. "She ordered the barber woman to put a sort of glue on my head, so that I shouldn't have any curls."

"Poor little girl; but we can soon set that right. You see Nurse Annie has already got your sister's hair into a little order. Now we will attend to yours. I think, dear, Miss Pinchin overstepped her duties; but I must not complain. She meant well. That special pomatum is hardly *ever* used, although I wish some of my naughtiest girls to have their hair short."

"And am I one of your naughtiest?"

"Oh yes, Henrietta, quite."

"And Daisy?"

"Poor Daisy; we won't talk of her now. Come! you would like to get your curls back."

If Henrietta had a passion in this world, it was for her red curls, and even short curls were better than none at all. Mrs. Faithful put the girl into the care of the same kind-looking woman who had brought up her breakfast.

"Dinah," she said, "do what you can for Miss Henrietta. Get all that sticky stuff out of her hair, and keep her with you afterwards, Dinah. I shall have a little room prepared for her to-night to sleep in next my own."

"The Chamber of Love, madam?"

"Yes, Dinah, that is the room."

"Well, of all the wonderful things," muttered Dinah. "Come, Henrietta."

So Henrietta went obediently, and the sticky stuff was removed from her hair, which, released from its bondage, curled and fuzzed all over her head.

She looked at herself in the glass, and instantly skipped and danced for joy.

"Hurrah, hurrah," she said. "Dinah, old duck, I *must* hug you."

Dinah was decidedly prim and a Quaker. She said, "Thee wilt keep thy praises and thy embraces for those who require them. For me, I like not to be embraced."

"Oh, what a horrid house," said Henrietta, "but anyhow I've got my curls back. Now, Dinah, I won't hug you if you don't like it; but can I see Pinchin? I'm just dying to smack her."

"My dear, control those evil feelings. Joan Pinchin has been sorely tried, and has gone away for a week's holiday. Now, thee wilt be a good maid and follow me to my room, where I employ my time in making the school uniforms. Thou and I will dine there together. I have ordered a refreshing and serviceable meal."

"Upon my word, I *am* peckish," said Henny. "I'll gobble, I can tell you."

CHAPTER XX.

A FAILURE.

THERE are seasons that come into the lives of all people which are full of perplexity, of doubt, of difficulty. Such a time came now to that most admirable woman, Jane Faithful. She was dismayed. She wondered if she had been over-boastful about her little school; if she had acted rightly towards the children who were committed to her care. It is true she had from the very first strongly objected to the arrival of Henrietta and Daisy. They, she considered, had stepped a little beyond the bounds. Before now she had restored troublesome, obstinate, idle girls to their parents or guardians with completely changed characters. These girls were no longer troublesome and wilful; they were no longer idle and defiant. But the Mostyns had gone far beyond these ordinary kinds of naughtinesses, and Mrs. Faithful honestly did *not* wish for them. She said so plainly to the Rector, but the Rector had looked so pale, so sad, so ill, so terribly troubled that, because she loved him, as all others loved that good man, she made an exception in his favour. She would keep these wild girls *on a condition*. Maureen was to come

to her. The Rector, looking sadder and more mournful than usual, consented to Mrs. Faithful's plan, for he did not know how to refuse. He simply did not know what to do with his step-daughters, and he felt that he must save them at any personal cost.

Then, most unluckily, Mrs. Faithful, knowing nothing of their queer characters, set to work the wrong way. There were certain rooms at the top of the spacious house, which were seldom, indeed hardly ever, used. They were rooms of extreme punishment and a special sort of dress was required to be worn by the girls who occupied these rooms.

Mrs. Faithful determined, very wrongly as it turned out, to put the obstreperous girls there until Maureen O'Brien arrived. They would be under the special care of Dawson, a most faithful Scots-woman and an old servant in the school, and of Miss Joan Pinchin.

Now Mrs. Faithful, knowing that Miss Pinchin had treated naughty and unmanageable girls before in a truly excellent manner and had soon in fact effectually brought them round to the laws of discipline and goodness, never imagined that Miss Pinchin, contrary to her wont, would treat this pair of rebels with extreme and unnecessary severity, and that Dawson, faithful Dawson, would take a violent dislike to them when she saw them. When the girls were put into Miss Pinchin's care, she made a request. It was this: would Mrs. Faithful allow her, Joan Pinchin, to have the entire care of the Irish

girls for the first week? She even ventured the request that Mrs. Faithful should not see them during this short time.

"I can manage them," she said. "I am certain I can manage them, but I can do it more easily if no one interferes with me. Believe me, dear Mrs. Faithful, that the Mostyns will be removed from the Hall of Discipline to the cheerful Hall of Contrition on the next floor before the week is up. Soon after that they will have opportunities of mingling with their fellow-students."

"Remember," said Mrs. Faithful, "I wish for no harshness. The girls are like wild, unbroken colts, and must be treated accordingly. Gentleness, dear Joan, and all kindness that is possible. Remember, I trust you."

"You may, you may," said Miss Pinchin.

And now all might have gone well, for Miss Pinchin had most assuredly managed very naughty girls before. Her scheme in the plan of the school was to manage naughty girls. But it so happened with regard to the Mostyns that this admirable woman lost her temper completely over Henrietta and Daisy. The moment this happened she also lost her power over them. They openly rebelled. They jeered at her to her face. Daisy mimicked her to the life. Henny screamed and choked with laughter. The poor governess was reduced to despair; but she would not, she could not, give in.

She tried measures more and more severe, and

more and more openly did the girls defy her, until at last there came that climax which has been described in the last chapter.

Daisy Mostyn might best be described as an imp or a minx. There was no doubt whatever that her character was most daring. She made up her mind to refuse her food; she also made up her mind, if Miss Pinchin had recourse to the cane again, to snatch it from the governess herself and try it on her very thin person. What a glorious uproar that would make.

She confided her plan to Henrietta, and Henrietta applauded.

"I'll help ye, acushla mavourneen," she cried. "Lawk a massy me, what a fuss there'll be when Pinchin is under the rod."

But alas for the wildest and naughtiest preparations, Daisy, although she had a queer strength of character, in a very naughty direction, it is true, was sadly weak in body. Her starvation did not suit her.

On retiring to rest the night before she intended to begin her persecution of Pinchin, she turned most deadly sick. Henrietta thought nothing of this, and pulled her out of bed in the morning. The sequel has been told.

Daisy was very ill indeed—quite delirious. She talked incessantly of Fly-away, of the medicine glass and the laudanum bottle. She also talked of the dark lantern. She chattered unceasingly. Her lit-

the white face looked whiter and more pinched each moment; her small eyes more dazzlingly bright, and as the day advanced to its close, her wild mutterings became incoherent. Dr. Halsted was seriously alarmed about her, and two nurses were appointed to take charge of the sick girl.

Towards evening there came a short and refreshing telegram from Maureen O'Brien to Mrs. Faithful: "Expect me the morning after next.—Maureen O'Brien."

"Little dear—oh, how welcome she will be," thought the harassed mistress.

She got everything in readiness for the girl. She sent for Henrietta and told her the good news.

"What! *That* brat coming here," said Henrietta. "I'm sure I don't want her. It was because of herself, no less, that all this trouble came."

"Henrietta," said Mrs. Faithful, "do you mean deliberately to go on with your wicked ways?"

"Oh yes, I quite mean to," said Henrietta.

"Are you aware that your sister is dangerously ill?"

Henrietta stared for a minute.

"I like my hair fuzzy-wuzzy," she said, and she rumbled it up with both her hands, then stood with her arms akimbo, looking hard at Jane Faithful. "I have the promise of becoming a handsome woman, haven't I?" she continued.

"Oh, Henrietta," said poor Mrs. Faithful, "when

you talk like this at such a moment, you break my heart."

Henrietta continued to stare very hard.

"I can't cry about *Dysy*—*give me your answer, do,*" she remarked, "but somehow I don't mind old Dinah with her 'thees' and her 'thous.' Of course, I said from the first that Dysy would hop out. She was always a delicate little thing. We used to fuss about her a lot when we were in a proper school. Then poor mumsie broke her neck. We never saw mumsie after she married the Rector, so naturally we didn't much mind; but we did mind the loss of our fortune. It was an awful blow to us. It was beastly unfair; don't you think so, Mrs. Faithful?"

"I don't think about it, child. In the Country where poor Daisy is going money is of no account."

"Poor old Dysy! Well, to be sure, she had lots of fun in her! I declare, you look as though you were sorry for her."

"I am, my child—most bitterly sorry!"

"And are you, perhaps, a bit sorry for me?"

"Yes, Henrietta; oh, yes." And Jane Faithful, that sternest of women, gave way utterly and began to weep.

Henrietta continued to stare at her, then she said in a low voice: "Dear, goodness gracious! *What* a fuss about nothing! I don't mind staying with Dinah. Her 'thees' and 'thous' are so funny.

I take them off like anything. I imitate her like fun, and she never answers back."

"Henrietta, have you *any* heart?"

"Dunno. 'Spect I have a bit. Here's my hanky-panky. Let me wipe your tears. I don't like to see you crying for *us*."

"If you are not sorry for your sister and yourself, will you at least be sorry for me?" said Mrs. Faithful.

"What earthly good will that do you?"

"But can you try to be sorry for me?"

"Well, I never! Yes, I'll try. You don't look at all pretty when you sob, you know. There, now, I have wiped away your tears. I think you have a dear old face, after all. If only I could manage to smack Pinchin, I might learn to love you."

"Come, Henrietta, we have had enough of this. You look sadly tired, my little girl. Dinah will take you to your bedroom."

"Oh, I say, must I sleep alone in the Room of Penitence? I'll be dreaming of Dysy all night."

"No; there is another room got ready for you."

Henrietta remained quite silent while Mrs. Faithful got up and rang the bell in a peculiar way. She had a method of her own for calling the special people she required to come to her.

Dinah now entered the room. Dinah smiled quite benignly upon Henrietta.

"Thy hair is in a mop," she said. "Curly hair is what we in our Body call a Desecration."

"Oh Dinah, honey, how can I help it when God gave it to me!"

"Don't scold her now, Dinah," said Mrs. Faithful. "Be very gentle with her. I am relieved to tell you that Miss Maureen O'Brien is coming. She is the daughter of that dear Mr. Maurice O'Brien whom we all so loved."

"Ah, indeed, and we truly loved him!" said Dinah. "Thou art wearing thyself out, dear Jane Faithful."

"I am sad and anxious," said Jane Faithful.

"Might I take the liberty of returning to thee, Jane Faithful, when this little perverse one is safe in her bed?"

"Yes, Dinah, I shall welcome you."

"Come, Henrietta," said Dinah. She held out her hand.

Henrietta went away with her at once. She did not wait to say good-night to Mrs. Faithful. She forgot Mrs. Faithful in the presence of Dinah.

"Why dost thou call me Henrietta?" she inquired. "Dost thou not know that thou art taking a *great* liberty? For I—I am a lady with a fortune, although it is but a small one, and thou art only a poor serving maid."

"In our community," replied Dinah, "we never call anyone except by the baptismal name. There is no Mrs., no Miss, no Mr. in *our* community. Now come; I have something nice for thy supper."

"Feel my tummy-tum," said Henrietta. "It

is ever so empty. I hope thy supper will prove to be a true supper, large in quantity, rich in quality, and fit for a Christian maid."

"But, my dear, thou art not a *Christian* maid. Nevertheless, thy supper is sufficient. Come now to my room and eat."

Henrietta went. The supper was of the very best: Green peas, roast duck, new potatoes, a glass of milk, and some stewed peaches.

"Upon my word," said Henrietta, "I like thy calm ways, Dinah. I, too, will become a Quaker and say 'thee' and 'thou,' not because of spiritual guidance, but because the Quakers nourish their little tum-tums so well."

"Henrietta, thou must not speak like that."

"Dinah, thou art not to scold me. The woman here, called Faithful, said I was to be dealt gently with. Dost thou know, dear Dinah, that a dreadful trouble is coming on me?"

"Indeed, I fear it," said Dinah.

"Oh, I don't mean about Dysy—poor little snip-pet! I mean something far worse."

"I fail to understand thee," replied Dinah.

"I will whisper it to thee, Dinah. My *direst*, *darkest*, most *fearful* enemy is coming on the scene—she whom I hate. Couldst thou not hide me from her?"

"What dost thou mean, Henrietta?"

"The one they call Maureen is coming. She is

coming very soon, the day after to-morrow—quite early.”

Dinah was silent.

“Couldst thou not hide me from her, dear Dinah?”

“Dost thou mean the young daughter of Maurice O’Brien of blessed memory? Ah, but to look into *his* eyes was to look into the Joy of Life, and the Peace of Heaven combined. It is impossible for thee, Henrietta, to hate that blessed child.”

“And wilt thou also join the band of her worshippers?” asked Henrietta.

“I only worship the Lord my God, and Him only do I serve.”

“Then thou wilt hate her?”

“Hate?” said Dinah. “I know not the word.”

“Ah, but I can teach it to thee. It is so jolly nice to hate.”

“Henrietta, it is far, far nicer to *love*. Now thou hast consumed this large meal and much work awaits me. I will take thee to thy chamber and see thee into bed, poor little one!”

“Thou hast a sweet voice, Dinah. It is such a pity that thou canst not hate. Well, I will do it for us both, and then it will be jolly fearsome.”

Dinah made no remark, but, taking Henrietta’s hand, led her to the Chamber of Love.

“Is it here I am to sleep?” said the girl. “Why, how pretty! Wilt thou lie beside me on this bed,

Dinah? Why, the walls are all pale blue like the sky; even the bed is blue. Why am I put here?"

"Because of Love," said Dinah. "See what is written on the door; and commune well with thine own heart, before the Angel of Sleep visits thee. Can one who *hates* have sweet dreams in this Chamber where Love dwells?"

"Then I hate the room; I won't stay in it," said Henrietta.

"Dear little girl, wilt thou not for my sake?"

"I'd do a great deal for thee," said Henny, "only I wish those words weren't written over the door." For reply, to the unbounded amazement of Henrietta, Dinah fell on her knees; she folded her soft, white hands and raised her gentle, dovelike eyes so that they looked out, as from a summer sky. Henrietta longed to fly from the room, but the sight of the kneeling woman restrained her.

After an interval of profound silence, the woman began to speak: "Lord, Thou art here! Come close, Lord, close, and fold—yes, fold—this little tempestuous being in Thy embrace! Lord, have mercy, have pity——"

She suddenly stopped, for there came a resounding smack on her cheek.

"Stay here, Quaker woman!" said Henrietta. "This room is not fit for me. I am going out!"

Before poor Dinah could rise from her knees, Henrietta had dashed away, had flown down the quiet, orderly house and out into the soft, summer night.

She ran fast, as though furies were pursuing her. She soon left the precincts of Felicity and still ran on and on, with panting breath, cheeks on fire, and a little rumpled head of fiery hair.

She saw a wood in the distance, and got into it. The dew lay heavy on the grass—oh, how cool, how delicious! She flung herself on the grass and fell sound asleep.

Poor distracted Dinah came down in a state of anything but peace to Mrs. Faithful.

“She’s gone, m’m.”

“Gone! Who? Which?”

“I don’t know anything about Daisy, Jane Faithful. It’s Henrietta. She’s very queer, and when I tried to comfort her and offered up a few words of prayer, directed assuredly by the Blessed Spirit, she smacked me on the cheek. Not that I mind that—thou knowest it is but a trifle—but before I could stop her, she had flown, I know not where. She was quite tractable until I took her to her beautiful bedroom, and then the name sent her wild. I’m afraid we shall have trouble with her, dear Jane Faithful.”

“Dinah,” said Mrs. Faithful, “do you think she has gone out?”

“I apprehend that she has done so,” said Dinah.

“In that case, Dinah, you and I will go and seek for her. We will go alone, for she cannot have gone very far.”

Mrs. Faithful and Dinah found Henrietta sound asleep on the wet grass in the wood nearest to Fe-

licity. She was dragged to her feet, and the two women brought her back.

The remainder of that night she slept warm and snug in the arms of Dinah.

"Thou art a good sort, Dinah," was her last remark, as she dropped off into the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE SCHOOL.

MRS. FAITHFUL had never before, in the whole course of her long years as a school-mistress, pronounced herself a failure, but on this occasion she did. She was an essentially honest woman. She told her girls the truth, and what was far more to the point, she told *herself* the truth. She took her character, so to speak, to pieces, and wondered, as she did on the present occasion, where she could possibly have gone wrong.

The two girls left in her charge were naughty girls—*very* naughty girls—but then she had had naughty girls before. Of course, these were undoubtedly worse, more defiant in their characters, than any of the various maidens who had visited Felicity and had gone through its stern and yet withal its beneficial training; for the school was, as a matter of fact, divided into two parts. There were the girls who needed sharp correction, who required individual and most anxious care, and there were the girls who, having successfully and victoriously passed this ordeal, had entered the happy and bright portion of the school.

Here indeed, as far as the East is from the West, all things were different; here, in those lovely rooms called Faith, Hope, Charity, Joy, were laughter and mirth, were games and all pleasantness. There was an intermediate room called Patience. In this room the girls as a rule remained under a very diluted form of discipline for two or even perhaps three months. During this time their hair was allowed to grow, and their uniform was changed from dull grey and white to pale blue and white.

When they entered the happy rooms above mentioned, they were altogether different from those most unhappy girls who went through Penitence and Discipline. There was no enjoyment denied to them, as long as they were good and obedient. Obedience was required, discipline was maintained, but over all the Sun of Love and Kindness shone.

In the summer they romped in the gardens and the paddocks. They forgot the dismal, the awful period when Penitence and Discipline were their portion. All went well with them, and Mrs. Faithful loved these pupils dearly. She sent them back by-and-by to their homes completely changed characters, earnest in their efforts, willing and anxious to work, with a great deal of vanity and self-conceit, the ruin of so many girls, completely knocked out of them.

Poor Miss Pinchin, as she was called—except by Dinah, who called her Joan—had the painful charge of the first breaking in of these young, wild creatures.

Mrs. Faithful considered her an admirable woman for the purpose. How was it that she so signally and completely failed with Henrietta and Daisy?

Daisy was lying most dangerously ill. Henrietta was unmanageable. Maureen was expected. She might arrive at any moment. She had said in her telegram that she would come early, and the day of her arrival had dawned.

Mrs. Faithful felt terribly unhappy; she knew that if Daisy got worse, it would be her duty to wire to the Reverend Patrick O'Brien to beg of him to come immediately to see his step-daughter. Her keen eyes had perceived at a glance how ill her kinsman looked. She knew also that he did not really love these girls, who were not his own. She bitterly regretted now having yielded to her softer nature, and taken the girls into the school at all.

Well, she had done it *on a condition*, and the condition was agreed to. Maureen O'Brien was coming. This fact alone would have given the poor lady untold delight, but for Henrietta's intemperate and extraordinary remarks about her. She feared that Henrietta would torment the child, so high-minded and noble in nature. She resolved, however, on an expedient which she trusted might save her.

Maureen, whatever happened, must *not* be unhappy. She was not coming to the school as a pupil, but as a guest; Mrs. Faithful therefore resolved to have prayers half an hour earlier than usual that morning and then to give a short address to the

girls—those girls who had passed through the worst stage of discipline and were thoroughly enjoying themselves at the school.

Amongst these was one called Margaret Devereux. There was also another—Evelyn Ross. They were cousins, and had been at first most troublesome, most defiant, most disobedient. They had now been four years at Felicity, and no one would recognise them for the little uncared-for wild imps whom their unhappy fathers had brought to the school, begging Jane Faithful to do what she could for them.

Jane Faithful, aided by her staff of teachers, did her best, and sweeter, brighter girls than Margaret Devereux and Evelyn Ross it would be difficult to find. They were neither of them exactly beautiful, but there was a wonderful look of strength about them, like those who have met Apollyon in the Valley of the Shadow—and have come out on the other side. All the other girls were of varied intensity of character.

The remarkable thing about all these girls was that they *had* characters, that there was nothing small about them. It was impossible to reach the Halls of Faith, Hope, and Joy without having passed through Conflict. This expression is seldom seen on a young face, but when it is there, it has a specially ennobling effect.

Mrs. Faithful thought that a great deal might be done for Maureen by means of Margaret and Evelyn, but she wanted all her band of bright girls, all those

who had passed through the Valley, to be kind and interested in the newcomer. She therefore spoke about her very simply.

"I have a few words to say to you, girls," began the headmistress. They were all in white on this summer morning, and as they were just preparing to go into the large schoolroom to begin their accustomed work, they paused and turned in some astonishment. Margaret, in especial, clasped the hand of Evelyn Ross and squeezed it.

Now Evelyn and Margaret four years ago used to be the direst foes. They were members of one household, but they could not live happily together or with anyone else; hence the chief reason for their arrival at Felicity.

"My dears," said Mrs. Faithful, who observed this affectionate clasp, "I have some pleasant news for you all. I am expecting almost immediately a young visitor. She is, I believe, fifteen years of age, but although tall looks much younger than her years. I have heard of her, but have not seen her. She will not be a pupil unless indeed she wishes to join any special class. She will sleep in the Chamber of Peace, and I want you, Margaret, and you, Evelyn, as my head girls, to take special care of her, and to do all in your power to make her happy. She has, I believe, a specially fine character which may be partly accounted for by her birth, for she belongs to mixed races, being French on her mother's side and Irish on her father's. Her name is Maureen, her

surname is O'Brien. Maureen, as perhaps you know, is the Irish for Mary. She is greatly beloved by her uncle, and as far as I can tell by most of those who know her. There is, however, an exception, and I want you, Margaret, and you, Evelyn, to guard Maureen O'Brien against that exception. You have not yet been introduced to Henrietta Mostyn. Alas, alas! poor girl! It will, I greatly fear, be some time before you make her acquaintance. She has lived in the same house with Maureen, and cordially *hates* her—I *fear* because she is good. Now you know what an awful thing hatred is. We have banished it, I hope, from the greater part of Felicity."

"We have—we have," said Margaret and Evelyn.

"I therefore ask you, my dear children," continued the headmistress, "to be particularly good to Maureen O'Brien. She comes of a noble stock. I wish you could have seen her father, Major O'Brien. He belonged indeed to those gifted ones whom the Lord has blessed. He was a soldier in the truest sense of the word. He died from the effects of a wound in battle, when Maureen was a very little child. Her mother had died before him. Major O'Brien died in saving a fellow-soldier who was in desperate straits. He dragged him away from the range of the enemies' guns. For this splendid action he got his V. C., and, although he died of his wounds later on, he truly died covered with glory. Now, my children, will you help me with regard to Maureen if she requires your help?"

"We will—we will!" said one and all.

"We should love to!" cried Margaret.

"We just adore her already," remarked Evelyn.

At that moment the sound of wheels was heard approaching on the winding gravel sweep.

"She has come," said Mrs. Faithful. "Go to your lessons, girls; you will meet her at early dinner."

The girls went away, filled with the keenest excitement. Mrs. Faithful had struck the right note. Patriotism and the love of country were in their blood. Maureen, in their eyes, was a heroine before they saw her.

Mrs. Faithful had been quite sure she had done right as she went into the centre of the hall, where Dominic and Maureen were standing.

The boy held out his hand; the girl struggled to speak, but her face was very white.

"You are tired, darling," said Mrs. Faithful.

"She is—she's beat out," said Dominic.

"Dom—you know I'm not beat out." The clear, rather slowly pronounced words, which were some of Maureen's peculiarities, dropped from her pretty lips. "I've come here—indeed, I have—just to be useful and to make *no* trouble."

"Ha! Ha! Naughty one—I know you!" suddenly shouted a voice, and a fiery head was poked over the staircase, and Henrietta clapped her hands. "You make yourself useful, indeed! I like that."

There was an evident tussle between Henrietta

and a grave, sweet, elderly woman, who was dragging her back.

"Thou shalt not—thou shalt not!" cried the naughty girl. "She's my enemy—she has come! Let me alone, Dinah, with thy 'thees' and thy 'thous.' *I'll* get at her; nothing will keep me back."

"Thee wilt come with me immediately to thy excellent breakfast," was Dinah's response.

"Ah, my poor tummy, it *is* empty," exclaimed Henrietta. "Well, I'll feed up a good lot, and get all the stronger, because of that which lies before me. Canst thee tell me, Dinah, where old Pinchin kept her birch-rod?"

"I could tell thee, child, but I will not. Eat this delicious honey and this fresh bread and good butter, and drink this rich creamy milk, and forget that wicked thing called Hatred."

"I'll gobble hard, thou mayst be sure," remarked Henrietta, "but thou mayst also be sure, that NOTHING will induce me to give up my darling hatey-hate! Fancy thee and me—two Quakers—and I doing the hatey-hate for both. It's pretty strong, Dinah duck. Oh, Dinah, Dinah, I wish thou wouldst *sometimes* laugh."

"How can one laugh with a sore, sore heart," was Dinah's response. "Ah, Henrietta, poor babe, thou dost not guess the sorrows that await thee."

Meanwhile Mrs. Faithful took her young guests into her own sitting-room, where she gave them an excellent breakfast, and told Dominic that there was

a very nice hotel quite close, where he could stay for the day if he liked, and could come and see his cousin in the afternoon.

"Yes, do, Dom," said Maureen.

"I will, if you wish it, Maureen."

"It's all settled about Uncle Pat now, so you can stay," said Maureen.

"Then I will stay for one night," answered Dominic. "What is the name of the hotel, Mrs. Faithful?"

"I will send one of my men with your things there, my boy," said Jane Faithful. "You can come back here again to dinner. We dine at two."

"I think I will go with the man at once," said Dominic. "I am tired and dirty. We travelled right through, and the way was long."

"The hotel is called the Rose and Honeysuckle," said Mrs. Faithful. "Ring that bell three times, Dominic."

Dominic obeyed. One of the grooms appeared. He was given brief directions, and the man and the boy started off to the Rose and Honeysuckle, the man wheeling Dominic's little suitcase on his barrow.

He was much taken by the Irish lad.

"And now, please, tell me everything," said Maureen to the headmistress. "Where are they? how are they?"

"Oh, Maureen, my darling, you are barely in time. I have only bad news for you—bad news! Poor

little Daisy is most dangerously ill. We went the wrong way to work with them both."

"You tried perhaps the way of *fear*," said Maureen.

"Yes! I am afraid we did."

"Henrietta seems as determined as ever," said Maureen; "but what has made Daisy so ill?"

"It is a long story, Maureen, but I will tell it you in as few words as possible. I know the school—and when I say the school, I speak of the girls who have passed through their time of Penitence and Rebellion and through Discipline and Patience, and have learnt the joys which await those who follow *His* Commandments. These girls, and there are many of them in the school, will receive you, Maureen, with rejoicing. But you look very, very tired. Had you not better come to your chamber and sleep?"

"I—sleep?" said Maureen. "No; I want to work."

"But it would not be right for you to see those wild girls at present."

"Yes, it would be quite right," said Maureen. "Please pardon me, Mrs. Faithful, but I have come here principally to ask their forgiveness. I did them a very terrible wrong."

"Maureen, do I hear you aright? Your uncle said that the girl called Daisy tried to poison your horse."

"Yes—and I—oh I must not talk of it, except to them. I *will* find them—I *must* find them. May I

go to my room just for a few minutes and wash and put on something white, and then I will go to them both."

"I am certain, my child, the doctor will not allow you to visit Daisy."

"Well, may I at least see the doctor when he comes?"

"You certainly may do that. As a matter of fact, I expect him at any moment."

"Then I will go to my room, if you will take me."

Mrs. Faithful conducted the girl to the Chamber of Peace. Maureen looked round her, and her lovely eyes grew bright.

"Oh, how exquisite," she said. "And a bath-room and all. Give me barely ten minutes. Please remember that I must see the doctor."

In almost less than the time mentioned a grave-looking girl in pure white, her thick brown hair neatly arranged, her soft brown eyes full of a sort of divine love, her lips slightly tremulous, but nevertheless firm and sweet, stood outside the Infirmary, where Daisy Mostyn tossed from side to side on her little bed, while the cruel fever, like a consuming fire, burnt her slender life away.

Dr. Halsted went in and saw the patient. He came out again shaking his head.

"We must have a consultant," he said to the nurse. "The symptoms are most alarming. Why, *who* is this young lady?"

"I am Maureen," was the girl's quiet reply. "I

want to go to Daisy—I have known her for some time. She and I lived in the same dear home in Ireland. There is something I want to say to her and afterwards to her sister, Henrietta. I promise most faithfully not to make her worse. May I go to her?"

"Yes, child, go," said the doctor.

He looked at the nurse and said:

"Is that an angel or a human being? Alas, alas, I fear there is little hope. I shall get Dr. Duncan immediately, but let that little white angel do what she can."

Henrietta had been peeping about. Henrietta was speechless with rage. She set to work tearing her clothes and upsetting everything she could in Dinah's neat room.

Dinah, although the soul of gentleness, could be very firm when she liked. She deliberately got a strong cord and fastened Henrietta into a chair in such a position that, struggle as she might, she could not move.

She made the remark, after fastening her victim securely into the chair of punishment, "Thee art full of mischief, and thee wilt stay here until I choose to unfasten thee. Weep away, poor sinner; no one will hear thee in *my* room. Thou wouldst have killed thy sister had I not caught thee in time."

"But the enemy is with her—the enemy!" shrieked and sobbed Henrietta.

"Dost thou indeed call that most beautiful, spir-

itual young creature an enemy? Ah, well, the Lord God, He hears—the Lord God, He hearkens. I will pray for thee, Henrietta, while thou art in thy chair of punishment, and where thou art now, thou canst not smack me on the cheek. I promise faithfully, and where I promise I fulfil, that thou wilt stay in that chair until the Spirit tells me to untie thy cords.”

“Hypocrite, horror,” shrieked Henrietta; but Dinah was already on her knees, her dove-like eyes were closed, her lips were moving very slowly—not a sound could Henrietta catch.

She went on looking at Dinah and hurling every ugly word she could think of at that noble and patient head. The Quakeress went on praying. After a time there seemed to come over Henrietta a sort of awe. She even preferred Miss Pinchin and the *rod* to this. The silence was so intense. The position of the praying woman, in spite of the girl's own recklessness, was awe-inspiring.

At last, after quite an hour, Dinah rose from her knees, her eyes wet with tears.

Henrietta said softly, “Take my hanky-panky—I can't get at it—and wipe away those drops. Thou art a very pretty Quakeress. I will certainly join thee, for thou hast a marvellous effect upon me.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WHITE ANGEL.

MAUREEN had the calm of a really great nature. She went steadily now and took her place by the sick girl's bedside. Daisy glanced at her for a minute with dull and uncomprehending eyes, then she turned away with a sort of groan.

"She hates—hates—*hates* me," muttered the sick child. "I did my best to kill her horse, only I didn't mean to kill it. Upon my word, I didn't. I meant to make it bad as I am now, but that horrid Garry came and frightened me, and my hand shook and I couldn't put in the right quantity of the stuff. It is awful to be hated by one like Maureen. She is so strong—so strong. I'm a poor little nobody—but she—she crushes me down and down. It's awful, isn't it? Who are *you*?"

A dim, very dim, glance of understanding crept into the dull eyes.

"I," said Maureen. She spoke in her richest voice. "I am one who indeed gave way to that awful, unholy sin of hate; but all that has passed—has vanished. Where I hated, now I love. According to the strength of my hatred, so is the greatness of my love."

"Pah," said Daisy, "I expect you are one of the angels. I don't want any of them about. I suppose that means I am going to die. But I won't die; I won't go pop like mumsie, only I'm horrid hot. Angel, are you cool?"

"Yes; shall I hold your—your hand?"

"But you are not going to take me away?"

"No, indeed, I am not."

"Then if you are cool, you may hold my hand. You remind me of someone—I don't know who. A *good* person. I do so loathe good people; but then you are not a person at all. You are an angel. Angel, send those nurses away and hold my hand."

Maureen beckoned to the two women, who retired behind a screen in a corner of the room.

Maureen had extraordinary sympathy in her hand. Some people have that gift, and it is very remarkable. It quiets better than any drug; it soothes beyond any medicine which has ever yet been invented.

The girl, who had been tossing impatiently from side to side, began, slowly and impatiently at first, but after a time quite perceptibly, to feel the influence of the little hand. Then the two hands were placed over hers and she gave a deep sigh of relief.

"I'm better, I think," she said. "I'll soon be all right again, and ready to punch Pinchin and Maureen and all my enemies. I couldn't eat, you know; that's why I flopped down like this. Angel, will you stay with me?"

"Yes."

"And you don't hate me?"

"I—LOVE—you."

"You have a queer, deep voice—something like Maureen's. I say, shall we both fight her together?"

"We will," said Maureen.

"Ha! Ha! that's good. Ha! Ha! Ha! Have those horrible nurses gone?"

"They are not near you now. I command you to sleep. Close your eyes and sleep."

"Oh, but I do feel yawny. You wouldn't ask me to sleep if you knew what my dreams were."

"I can promise you will not have those dreams while I hold your hand."

"Then I think I will have a snooze. I am getting quite comfy. Mumsie, she broke her neck—doubled under her you know—and she left her money to Maureen—all of it to Maureen. Poor Henny and I were beggars. I'm getting *very* sleepy. Maureen has all the money—she who said, '*I hate you!*' But you are different, dear angel; you don't hate."

"No; as she hated, so do I in a much greater degree love."

"That's nice—I'll take a snooze. You won't mind if I keep my mouth open and snore?"

By the time the two doctors arrived, the girl in white with the wonderful eyes was seated by the bedside, and the sick girl who was so dangerously ill was in a light refreshing slumber. There were great drops of dew on her forehead. Maureen's little

hands held hers and the power of Maureen's love was surrounding her.

The nurses, who had listened to the conversation between the two, had told the doctors what had occurred. They listened in untold amazement.

Dr. Halsted said, "We will make a slight examination without waking her, and the girl in white must stay by her side."

It was some hours later, long past dinner-time, when Maureen slipped out of the Infirmary and went for a moment to the Chamber of Peace. She was, in truth, deadly tired. She felt like one who had been dragged through a rushing torrent; she felt like one who, hitherto strong, was now strangely weak.

This was not to be wondered at, for she had given of the very essence of her life to the sick girl, and before she left her she had turned the scales for Daisy Mostyn towards this present life.

The worst was over, the girl would live. Maureen rang her bell. Immediately Mrs. Faithful, who had been on the watch all these hours, came to the child.

"Oh, my dear, wonderful little girl," she began.

"Don't praise me, please," said Maureen. "I think she's better; I think she'll live."

"Yes; the doctors are quite sure she'll live, darling, and *you* have done it."

"It was the least I could do," said Maureen; "but please, I should like something to eat. I want to

rest for half an hour, and then I must see Henrietta."

"Oh, my child, you cannot go through fresh tortures with that terrible girl to-day."

"But indeed, please, I must. I have come here for the sake of those girls. May I have something—anything—sustaining. You see," continued Maureen, "I sort of—sort of put my life into Daisy. That's why I feel so tired. It can be done, and I did it."

At that moment the door was opened and one of the many nice servants appeared, carrying a tray of refreshing food for Maureen to eat. There was also a tiny glass of invalid wine.

"Lie on the bed, darling," said Mrs. Faithful, "and I will feed you."

"No," said Maureen. "Dear Mrs. Faithful, be as kind to me as you like to-night, when my task is over. But until it is over kindness might make me break down. By the way, is Dom here?"

"Of course he is. Would you like to see him?"

"Not yet."

"Then eat, dearest, eat. Don't take your glass of wine first. Eat."

Maureen smiled faintly, but obeyed.

The food was light and perfect. It was nourishing and easily digested. Mrs. Faithful saw that the girl was in a very high state of excitement, and took measures accordingly. She cut up the food into little morsels and made Maureen eat, and then she

gave her sips of the rare wine and did all that she did do in a sort of matter of fact way, for she knew that she had in her charge a very precious little girl and that she must take great care of her.

"I'm better now—quite well in fact," said Maureen when the meal had come to an end.

She stood up and stretched herself a little.

"You are good to me," she said. "I can't thank you; there's no time at present. Ask Dominic to wait for me until I want him. I shall want him, I hope, very soon."

"He's going to spend the day here, my love. At present he, Margaret Devereux, and Evelyn Ross are walking in the paddock. I think they are enjoying themselves very much."

"You have a beautiful home," said Maureen.

"It is a home with two sides, darling. For those who have conquered in the fight it is a beautiful home."

"I understand," said Maureen. "Thank you. Please, where shall I find Henrietta?"

"Oh, my darling, you must not go to her now. She's most troublesome and rebellious. We are doing all we can, but *nothing* seems to move her. You are not in a fit state for an interview with that terrible girl."

"Mrs. Faithful," said Maureen, "why did you send for me?"

Mrs. Faithful was silent; she absolutely blushed under that steadfast gaze.

"I will tell you why," said Maureen. "Uncle Pat told you everything, and you, wise woman that you are, knew perfectly well that you would require my help; that it was just possible for me to accomplish what you with all your knowledge might fail to attain. Please, I *must* go to Henrietta, and please, I am quite well now, and not at all tired, and I must accomplish my work before I rest."

"Well, child, I cannot refuse. I will ring for Dinah."

"Dinah? What a pretty name!"

"Yes, and she is good and strong—as good as her name. At present she is the sole caretaker of Henrietta Mostyn. I will just prepare you for the fact that she is a Quakeress."

"Oh, but I love them," said Maureen, her eyes shining.

"Here she comes then. Once she had the great privilege of helping to nurse your father. He had a sharp attack of fever at Felicity after the death of your dear young mother. Here she comes. Dinah, this is our Miss Maureen."

"Maureen O'Brien, I greet thee," said Dinah.

Dinah was an elderly woman. She wore the old-fashioned dress of her Order. She had a tight-fitting cap over her head, made of the softest, finest muslin. It was tied under her chin. Her eyes were like dove's eyes. She gave the instant impression of great peace.

Maureen looked at her and shivered a little. Then she said:

"Oh, I am glad to see you!"

"And I to see thee, sweetest and best," said Dinah.

"Dinah, take me to Henrietta."

"But, hast thee the strength?" inquired Dinah.

"God will give it to me, Dinah."

"Then thou shalt assuredly come. Take my hand."

The house of Felicity was very large and rambling, and certain rooms were sound-proof. This was found to be necessary on account of the outrageous conduct of some of the naughty girls when they first arrived. Dinah, still holding Maureen's hand, stepped lightly on the highly polished floor. Then she opened a door. There was a little dark passage inside. She opened a second door, and Maureen suddenly heard the wild shrieking notes of a voice which she knew but too well.

"Dysy—Dysy—give us your answer, do! *Dysy*—*Dysy*—why, I say—get out of this, brat!"

"Thou wilt not speak words of this sort," said Dinah.

"But I will, pretty Quakeress," said Henny, who was still securely fastened in the punishment chair. "I say, where's the birch rod? Dinah, me honey, take care of thy money; it's all botheration from bottom to top."

"Maureen O'Brien has come to see thee," remarked Dinah. "Thou wilt treat her civilly."

"I'm peckish, peckish," said Henrietta. "I don't want to see the enemy, and I'm tied into this odious chair, so that I can't get *at* her. I tell thee I'm just pining to scratch her face."

"Dinah, may I speak to Henrietta?" said Maureen.

"Thou hast full permission," said Dinah.

She sat down at once and went on with her eternal sewing. She had her back slightly turned to the two girls.

Henrietta burst into a scream of laughter.

"I say, Goody-two-shoes, doesn't *she* look nobby in that Quaker cap. I'm going to be a Quaker in future, and I'll 'thee' and 'thou' thee all out of the world. I expect I'll make a very striking Quaker. Isn't my hair jolly fuzzy? *She* took the glue out of it—you might rumple it up for me a bit if you like."

Maureen approached quite near. She laid her gentle hand on the little fiery head, and did what Henrietta required. Henrietta made some futile attempts to bite her, but Maureen was sharp enough to evade them.

"Henny," she said then in her gentle voice, "I must confess something to you."

"Lawk-a-massy me! That sounds a bit of Yorkshire relish. You—Goody-two-shoes—confessing forsooth! Well, go ahead. I'm in the mood to be pleased with any trifle; so would you, if you had been tied in this chair since early morning. It

doesn't hurt a bit. It's even fairly comfy, but I can't move my hands or arms or legs or even my head much. Dinah, Dinah, isn't it time for thee to feed thy sister Quaker again?"

"Not yet, child," was Dinah's reply.

"There," said Henny. "You see for yourself the way I'm treated, and yet I'm fond of Dinah. I'm going to join her persuasion and will go to the Meeting-House with her and speak when the Spirit prompts me. I have been thinking out what my first discourse will be. It will all be about a horrid girl called Maureen, who secured for herself a great lump of mumsie's money. I'll show you up, Maureen. I rather guess it will be an exciting meeting."

"Thou must not speak of our holy Meeting-House in that fashion," said Dinah.

"Please, dear Dinah," suddenly interrupted Maureen, "let her say just what she likes for the present."

Dinah bent over her fine sewing and her lips moved in silent prayer.

"That's how she goes on all day," said Henrietta. "Lively for me, isn't it? Well, Miss *Hate*—*Hate*—*HATE*, and how do *you* find yourself?"

"Henrietta, I've come here to-day——"

"Oh, I don't want humbug," said Henrietta.

"I've come here to-day," continued Maureen, "to unsay those cruel words. I own that I was frightfully hurt, and I gave way to great sin."

"Ah—the little saint—she gave way to *great sin*," repeated Henrietta.

"And God was very angry with me," continued Maureen.

"I should think so, indeed. You looked downright *shocking*."

"I cannot tell you of those days of misery; but the God who forgives forgave *me*, and great, great joy came back to me. And Love—oh, most wonderful—and Henny, of all the people whom I felt I ought to love and help, you and Daisy came first."

"Is Daisy going to die?"

"No; I think she will live. I have been with her for several hours."

"Lawk-a-massy me!"

"Now, Henrietta, I wish to tell you that having spent the entire morning with Daisy and being well assured that she will recover, I want to help you, for my hatred has been turned into love—very deep. Will you take it, dear Henny?"

"I take *your* love? Not I! I don't want it. I like your hatred best. I can speak better when the Spirit moves me, thinking of you as hating me."

"Poor Henrietta."

"Don't pity me. I won't be pitied."

"Very well, I won't. But I tell you what, I think you want a little change, and do you know that Dom is here?"

"Old Dom? I like old Dominic."

"Well, he's here. It was he who brought me over."

What I thought was this, that you and Dominic and I could go and have tea at Dominic's hotel—the Rose and Honeysuckle—in the town quite close. We'll have a lovely tea and come back in the cool of the evening. Don't you think it would be a good plan?"

"Is it joking you're after?" said Henrietta.

"No; I'm in earnest. Ask Dinah."

"Oh, I'd give the world to go," said Henrietta.

"Dinah, ducky of all ducky-ducks. Thou *wilt* say yes—thou *wilt* unbind the bands of thy sister and set her free."

Dinah rose very slowly.

"On a condition, I will do this thing," she remarked.

"What is that?"

"That thou dost not once raise the hand of spite against this dear lady."

"But I may feel it, I suppose."

"God help thee, poor child. Wilt thou never see the beautiful light?"

"I'm sure I'm staring at it when I look at thee," said Henrietta.

"I fear to loosen thee," remarked Dinah.

She sat down again in her chair.

Maureen felt puzzled. She seemed to have said everything, and exhaustion was again stealing over her. Suddenly, however, she was startled by a great cry.

"Dinah, Dinah, I'll be good. I'll not raise the

hand of spite. I must go out with Maureen and with Dominic; I must *gorge* at the Hotel."

"First thou wilt say these words after me: 'I love Maureen O'Brien.'"

"But I don't," said Henrietta.

Dinah resumed her sewing. Another half hour passed.

"Dinah, ducksie, I will *not* smack Maureen. Dinah, I—I love Maureen."

"Is that true?" asked Dinah.

"Yes; I've been wrestling in the Spirit—it is true."

"Then I will unfasten thee. But Maureen O'Brien, I will come with thee on this walk, and enter that inn called the Rose and Honeysuckle, for I do not consider it safe to send thee alone with this maiden."

"I don't mind having *thee*, Dinah," said Henrietta in a meek voice. "Come along, unfasten the cords; set me free—set me free. Oh, jolly! Oh, golloptious! Oh, my poor leg—it has got the cramp—and my arm! Let me walk up and down the room, Dinah, leaning on thee."

"Dinah," said Maureen, "is there not a prettier frock she could wear?"

"It is against the rules," said Dinah; "but everything appears to be against the rules to-day. I have just finished a little blue muslin robe with a pale blue ground covered with forget-me-nots, and there

is a hat with a wreath of forget-me-nots, which she can wear on this great occasion."

"Oh, golloptious!" cried Henny. "Let me get into the frock! Why, I am a *darling* Fuzzy-wuzzy. Look at my hair, Maureen. Don't you envy it like anything?"

"You must be quick," said Maureen. "The dress is very pretty."

She helped Dinah to get Henrietta into the blue dress. The little hat, on the top of the tangle of red hair, was really becoming. Then the Quaker woman put on her own long gray cloak and her Quaker bonnet, and promised to meet Maureen with Henrietta outside the grounds in ten minutes' time. There Dominic and Maureen did meet Henrietta and her companion.

Dominic gave Henrietta one of his straight glances.

"I'm good, Dommy," she said, "and I love Maureen like *anything*; but oh, I *am* so peckish. How soon can we get a good spanking feed?"

"I expect before long," said Dominic. "Don't lean on me, Henrietta. I have no doubt that good lady will offer you her arm if you require it, and I must help Maureen."

Thus they started off and reached the Rose and Honeysuckle. Henrietta mightily enjoyed the good things set before her, and fixed her bold, blue eyes on each individual who came into the coffee-room.

Having at last satisfied even *her* appetite, she

tried the dodge of whispering to Dominic, but Dominic said aloud, "Whispering is not good form," then turned and spoke to Maureen.

He spoke in a low, confidential voice to his dear little cousin, and Henrietta's fiery temper assumed the colour of her hair. The Quaker woman was, however, watching her. But she herself was unaware of this fact.

Suddenly she sprang from her seat, and pulling Maureen towards her gave her several violent kisses on her lips, forehead, and cheeks. At the same time she managed to tangle the table-cloth round Maureen's little feet, so that when the party rose to go Maureen was the last to leave the table. She did not know what Henny had so cleverly contrived to do, but the entire contents of the tea-service were scattered in hopeless confusion on the floor. Cups and saucers were smashed, so was the old-fashioned slop bowl, and so was the cream jug and cake plates.

But not only did all this mischief occur, but the tea from the large metal teapot was spread all over the damask table-cloth, and a part of the liquid mess lay also on the neat carpet. Even worse was to follow, for Henny pretended that she liked her tea weak, and a small brass urn full of boiling water shared in the general ruin; it had a spirit lamp beneath, and Maureen in trying to save it, and to put the lamp out, burnt and scalded her hand and arm rather badly. The pain made her turn faint and sick for a moment, but she quickly recovered herself.

Henrietta, who saw everything, was in wild spirits.

"For such a *very* good colleen, you were awkward, Maureen mavourneen," she cried. "Hurrah! I can't help it. A pretty sum you will have to pay; but that seems fair enough, for it will be out of poor Mumsie's money."

Maureen took no notice of Henny's words, but said something in a low tone to Dominic. The boy and girl between them spoke to the waiter, and made up for the damage inflicted.

"Thou and I will walk quietly home together, Henrietta," said Dinah.

"I don't want to; I want to walk with Dorn," said the girl.

"Thou wilt walk with *me*; Dominic and Maureen, precede us, please. I have words to say to this young maid."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WOUNDED HAND AND ARM.

THE moment the boy and girl, Maureen and Dominic, found themselves alone, to Maureen's surprise, Dominic lagged back and said a word to Dinah. She raised her delicate arched brows in pain and astonishment, then nodded her head and walked quickly to Felicity with Henrietta.

"Where are you going, Dominic?" said Maureen.

"That horrid scald and burn must be attended to," said the boy. "I am going to take you immediately to Dr. Halsted to have them both dressed."

"They do smart a little," said Maureen, "but the worst pain is over. Oh, Dom, dearest, don't let us make a fuss now. I am so anxious to get back to Felicity."

"But I am not anxious to take you back," said Dominic. "Come along, little mate, come along. This is Dr. Halsted's house."

Maureen really did feel sick and faint. The doctor by great good luck happened to be at home. He immediately dressed the wounded hand and arm and inquired how the accident could have occurred.

"It was my clumsiness," said Maureen. "I don't

know how it happened, but I must have caught my foot in the tablecloth. Oh, what's the matter? Oh, Dominic, don't look at me like that!"

"May my cousin lie on your sofa for a few minutes," said Dom, "and I will explain matters to you."

"Ah yes, that is really nice," said Maureen in a grateful tone. "But be quick, Dom, be quick. I feel that I am wanted back at Felicity."

The doctor and the lad left the room; the girl closed her tired eyes gratefully.

"The wound is very trivial," said Dr. Halsted, when he got Dominic into another room, "but I should have thought——"

"You wonder how it happened," interrupted Dominic. "Well, forgive me, I'll tell you. We're Irish folks, sir, and Maureen is about the most precious thing my father and I possess. I brought her here by Mrs. Faithful's request, and you know what she has done for that horrid girl, Daisy Mostyn."

"As my patient, I cannot call her a horrid girl," said the doctor with his grave smile, "but your cousin, as far as I can see, has saved her life. I have just returned from Felicity, and the news with regard to Daisy Mostyn is of the very best."

"There is another girl at the school," said Dominic, "sister to Daisy. That little angel, Maureen, after wearing herself out trying to save the life of one sister, did her best for the other. The other is not ill, except indeed in soul, so she need not come

under your professional sympathies, Dr. Halsted. My cousin, Maureen, suggested that she and I should take Henrietta to the hotel where I am staying and give her tea there just by way of a change. You may well suppose that I felt rather sick, for I honestly *detest* Henrietta Mostyn. However, my good sir, she was all agog to come. She was not a bit anxious about her sister. She had been put by Mrs. Faithful under the care of a nice gentle Quakeress named Dinah."

"I know her well," said the doctor; "she is an admirable person."

"Well," continued Dominic, "luckily, as it happened, Dinah insisted on coming with us. Henrietta was in her usual uproarious spirits—most horribly unsuitable. Upon my word, sir, I felt half sick. Then, what do you think? In the middle of the entertainment she jumped up and contrived, without dear little Maureen noticing it, to sweep a part of the tablecloth round Maureen's feet and legs. I was watching and saw the whole thing and would have prevented Maureen getting up until I disentangled the cloth, but she was too quick for me. There was a little brass urn on the table with a spirit-lamp, and the moment Maureen rose, everything tumbled off—the china and such like were smashed, and she, in her efforts to put out the spirit lamp, was badly burnt and scalded. Now, do you think, sir, that Felicity is a fit place for my cousin?"

"Hmm!" said the doctor. "She is badly wanted

there. Upon my word, that is an ugly story you have told me, Mr.——”

“My name is Dominic O’Brien,” said the lad.

“Well, you had better talk to *her*, young sir. Felicity is a curious place, and curious characters are found there from time to time. These characters belong, not to the *insane*, but to the *uncontrolled* of the earth. As a rule, and I have attended at the school for many years, my dear friend, Mrs. Faithful, has, by her admirable system, managed to reclaim these naughty girls, and they have left Felicity with their characters altered, and their chance of doing good work in the world assured.”

“Thank you,” said Dominic. He shook hands with the doctor, who, finding out where he was staying, invited him to come in and have a chat with him that evening. This the boy gratefully accepted. He then whistled for Maureen, who came to him looking very pale, but much as usual.

“Lean on me, *acushla machree*,” said the young lad.

They went in the direction of the school together.

“What in the world were you talking to Dr. Halsted about?” she asked.

“I was telling him how you got that burn.”

“But, darling Dom, that was through my awkwardness. I can’t imagine how I twisted the tablecloth round my feet.”

“You didn’t twist it round, *aroon*, bless your dear little heart. It was the act of that fiery one. I

watched her when she was pretending to kiss you. She did it very quickly and cleverly, and I was just about to prevent your rising when you were too quick for me. Oh, dear little Maureen, I *can't* leave you at Felicity, I *can't*."

Maureen's clear brown eyes were raised to her cousin's face, "But indeed and truly you can, Dominic, for my *work* is at Felicity, and even you, and even Uncle Pat, shall not, *must* not keep me back from my work."

"It's hopeless," said the lad, "quite hopeless. Oh, Maureen darling, even you cannot do the impossible."

"But I can, and I will," was the reply. "I mean that I shall stay at Felicity for the present. I am glad you have explained to me about poor Henrietta. I pity her so much."

"She doesn't deserve a scrap of pity," said the boy.

"Now, Dom, you are not going to put on that horrible cloak of hatred. Oh, Dom, it is so fearful! Once, *once* I wore it tightly round me for some days, and I shall never forget it—never! Oh, the agony that was in my breast! Of course, Dom, you know the old, old story of the Wind and the Sun. There was a traveller, who was mounting up into the high hills and the wind and the sun had a great quarrel about him and they swore a sort of oath that they'd tear his cloak from him. 'I'll do it,' said the Wind. 'You won't succeed,' replied the Sun; and the traveller, knowing nothing about this, walked up,

his cloak around him. Then the Wind came out in a mighty, mighty rage, rushed at him, and tore him and did all that Wind and Tempest could to get rid of his cloak. But the harder the Wind blew and the sharper it stung, the closer did the traveller fold his cloak round him. Then the Sun came out in a great golden beam, and said, 'You have had fair play, Wind, and I haven't interfered. Now, give *me* a chance.' So the Wind very sulkily died down, and the Sun poured his hot rays over the traveller, and lo, and behold! the traveller first loosened his cloak, and then cast it off and left it behind him on the mountain path. It was the awful Cloak of Hatred. And, Dom, dear Dom, that was what happened to me until the beautiful Sun of God's Love made me cast *my* cloak of hatred away; and never again, Dominic, will it come back."

"Well, at any rate," said Dom, "you can't prevent *my* staying at the Rose and Honeysuckle for a day or so longer."

"Oh no, I should quite love to have you."

As the children approached the house, they saw to their surprise Mrs. Faithful and Nurse Annie standing on the doorstep. They both of them looked distracted.

"Oh, Maureen, where *have* you been?" said Mrs. Faithful; "that poor little Daisy is worse than ever. Neither of the nurses can manage her in the very least. She is crying out for the angel—the white angel. Oh, my dear, dear child, how bad you look!

Has anything happened? But I can't wait to hear now. Dinah returned some time ago with Henrietta, and Henrietta looked terribly cross. But run to your room at once, my darling, and get into a clean white frock. Nurse Annie will help you, and then you can go to poor Daisy. We have sent for the doctor, but you are the best doctor of all."

"I won't be a minute—I'll fly," said Maureen.

She dashed up to her room, and with Nurse Annie's aid very soon looked fresh and neat and tidy. Her long soft brown hair fell over her shoulders.

"I am sorry that you have to go back to her," said Nurse Annie, "for you look just fit to drop, but you are the only one who can manage her. Those two poor nurses are in despair. When she woke and found you were not seated by her bedside, she began to cry out for you in the most piteous way. 'I want the White Angel,' she said. You could not be found—you were out—and her temperature, which had gone down so marvellously, has gone up again higher than ever. Oh, I say, Miss Maureen, how *have* you hurt your hand and arm?"

"My hand and arm were scalded through an accident," said Maureen. "They hurt a little, but nothing to signify. I am quite ready to go to her now."

"Bless you, sweet child, but that dear little hand ought to be in a sling."

"No, no," said Maureen, "she wouldn't like that. It only smarts a trifle."

A minute or two later Maureen was seated by the

sick girl's bed. There was a curious, but very perceptible, change in Daisy. She had looked ill in the morning, but now there was a wild excitement about her, and those cheeks, generally so pale, were rosy red with the fire of fever.

"Ah," she said with a sigh of intense relief. "White Angel, you have come back."

"Yes, little Daisy."

"Hold my hand. Soothe me. Let me rest against you."

Maureen immediately put her uninjured hand in Daisy's.

"I want both your darling hands; one isn't enough."

"The other—hurts a little, Daisy, and I—I'm afraid I cannot give it to you."

"Oh, but I *must* have it," said Daisy, and she gave a fierce grab.

Maureen restrained a scream of pain, then, stifling all emotion by means of a heroism worthy of her nature, she laid both the wounded and the whole hand on Daisy's.

"I'm not going to die, am I?" asked Daisy.

"Not if I can keep you alive, dear, but—Daisy, it is very beautiful in Heaven."

"You live there, don't you?"

"In spirit, yes," replied Maureen.

"Talk about it," said Daisy. "Keep on talking. Do they let naughty girls in?"

"Yes, undoubtedly; those who repent."

"But I—I have been shocking bad," replied Daisy, "and even now there is a girl whom I hate—hate—*hate!*"

"I know the girl you mean," said Maureen. "Once I hated her myself."

"Did you really! I didn't think angels could hate."

"Well, I hated *her*."

"Poor thing! It must have been awful when *you* hated her."

"It was very bad for *me*. I don't hate her or anybody now. The other thing is so much nicer."

"What other thing, White Angel?"

"Why, of course, Love—beautiful, golden Love. Suppose you and I begin to try that glorious thing."

"I'm very weak," said Daisy, "and hot, hot, oh, *so* hot. Do you think, White Angel, they would let me in at the Golden Gates, if I cease to hate *her*, the monster they call Maureen?"

"I think so. I'll ask the good Lord about it. You are too weak to pray. Lean on me."

"Oh, I will—I will! It's easy to love you, White Angel. Promise me one thing, please. You won't leave me any more forever! You won't let me go to sleep and then slip away."

"If I do go away, I'll come back very soon. But I'm going to stay with you now."

The whole weight of Daisy's little wasted body was flung across Maureen's wounded hand and arm. Maureen was suffering such tortures that she won-

dered she didn't faint, but her very pain kept her from this.

Dr. Halsted in a great hurry entered the room. Daisy screamed when she saw him.

"Go away! Go away! I've got a White Angel curing me. Get out of this, you old horror. Oh, hurrah, hurrah! Wherever is Henny? Not that I care. I have got the White Angel; she's worth ten thousand Hennies. Wasn't it fun when I dropped all the laudanum into the mash, and the horse had such beautiful eyes. He gobbled and gobbled and I—I stirred and stirred. I don't seem to remember much else. I think I'm drowsy. Don't you touch me, you horror. The White Angel is *my* doctor. She is telling me about a place called Heaven."

"My dear child," said Dr. Halsted. He did not address the sick girl, but Maureen. "She is lying on your wounded arm! Let me arrange you more comfortably."

"Don't touch her. I'll kill you if you do!" shrieked Daisy, and then she went off into a dead faint.

During that faint the doctor and the nurses were able to release Maureen from her torments, but she absolutely refused to leave Daisy's side.

"I have promised to stay with her," said Maureen. "When she comes to again, she will want me. Oh, Dr. Halsted, is she very ill?"

"Yes, child, this is a most serious and unlooked-for relapse. I will put you at this side of her, so

that she can lean against the hand and arm that are not injured. Nurses, a word with you both."

All during that night, that long and yet short night, Maureen retained her seat by Daisy's bedside, but although the poor girl quickly got over her swoon, she did not recover consciousness.

She mumbled and muttered and tossed and talked of White Angels and of her own special White Angel, whom she loved as she had never loved anyone before.

The doctor stayed in the house all night, and so, for that matter, did Dominic, and the nurses supported Maureen with food and necessary stimulants.

As the morning broke, and the first rays of a golden day streamed in at one of the windows, Daisy opened her eyes wide and looked steadfastly and long at Maureen.

"Why—why," she said. "Stoop close to me. You are *not* an angel. I know you now. *You are Maureen, and I love you. I love-you-better-than-anyone-else-in-the-whole-world.*"

With these words, uttered under great difficulty, and with long pauses between, the queer little spirit of Daisy Mostyn seemed to pass into a world where even *she* could be properly trained.



*"Stoop close to me.....You are Maureen, and I love
you."—Page 288.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHITE FLOWERS AND FORGIVENESS FOREVERMORE.

MAUREEN lay down in the Chamber of Peace and slept for long hours. It was very nearly noon on the following day when she awoke. She was quite refreshed, quite calm and very happy.

"Dear little Daisy," she murmured under her breath. Mrs. Faithful herself brought the girl a most carefully prepared breakfast.

"You ought to stay in bed, darling," she said. "You have gone through too much. Dominic and I both wish it."

"I stay in bed?" said Maureen, with one of her radiant smiles. "But I'm perfectly well, and I've got to attend to Henrietta now."

"Oh, my child, that poor, poor girl. Do you know, Maureen, that we have not dared to tell her."

"I am glad," said Maureen, after a pause. "I will tell her myself in my own way. Will you, dear Mrs. Faithful, ask Dom to collect heaps and heaps of white flowers—all the daisies and white wild flowers he can find and have them ready for me in a basket?"

"Yes, dearest, yes."

"I want to make her look beautiful before Hen-

rietta sees her," continued Maureen. "Have you locked the door of that room?"

"Yes, dear; girls are not accustomed to the sight of death."

"Will you give me the key, please?"

Mrs. Faithful found herself obeying this extraordinary child without a word. She not only gave her the key, but took Maureen's message to Dominic.

When Maureen had finished her breakfast, she washed in the delicious hot bath which adjoined her bedroom and dressed herself in the purest white Indian muslin. It clung in soft folds to her slim young figure. Then, as she left the room, she encountered Dominic, who was waiting for her in the corridor outside. He had a basket under his arm filled with all sorts of white flowers.

Maureen hastily produced wire and a thimble, needle, scissors and thread, then she and Dominic went in the direction of the Infirmary.

"I've never seen anyone dead, you know," said Dominic, pausing for an instant before that shut door.

"You never loved her in life, Dom, but you will love her now," said Maureen. "She is far, far above us *all* now. In the moment of death that evil spirit which so tormented her passed away forever, and the Spirit of Love came instead, and God sent one of his most beautiful Angels and took her home, poor little Daisy!"

"Maureen, how queerly you speak."

"Come and see for yourself," said Maureen. "The last thing she said before she left us was, '*I love you, Maureen, better than anyone else in the whole world.*'"

"Did she really?" said Dominic.

"Now, come and see," continued Maureen.

She unlocked the door, and the boy and girl entered the Infirmary. All the windows were wide open. There was a sweet gentle air blowing through the long room. A white sheet covered the head and slight figure of the girl.

Maureen gently removed the white sheet, and they both saw a tiny face, a face which had never once been beautiful in life, but now looked lovely. There was a faint smile on the lips. Daisy looked something like a lily flower, broken at the stem.

Maureen bent and kissed her.

"Good-morning, darling," she said. "Now, Dom, be quick, be quick. She is very cold, but I think somehow her spirit hears. Don't you know those words of Mrs. Barbauld's,

"Say not good-night,
But in a brighter sphere,
Wish me good-morning.

"Now, Dom, let us cover her with flowers. Flowers everywhere—flowers round her little head—flowers in her cold, wee hands—flowers scattered about

her. We'll make wreaths presently, you and I, but that is enough for the present. Oh, she looks at *last* what she was meant to be. Now, I must go to Henrietta."

Dom and his cousin left the Infirmary; Maureen put the key into her pocket. For one minute she knelt down in the Chamber of Peace and prayed very earnestly, then she went slowly with a shining light in her eyes to Dinah's room. She had forgotten about her scalded and burnt hand and arm; she forgot everything but the task which lay before her. She entered the room with a confident step and that beautiful light shining in her eyes; Dinah, who of course knew, but had not told Henrietta, was trying to occupy that young lady with some bead work.

Henrietta said the beads were dull in colour; she only liked bright things. The moment she saw Maureen she scowled and said, "Get away, brat!"

Henrietta, alas, was again placed in the punishment chair. Maureen looked at her with infinite sadness.

"Get away; why don't you go?" she continued. "*Dinah, me honey, take care of thy money; oh, Dinah, do let's get on with these beads.*"

"No," said Dinah, "I will not."

"Why not?" said Henrietta in amazement; "what ails thee, sweet maid?"

"Naught ever ails *me*," replied Dinah. "The peace of God which passes all understanding dwells in my heart. I know no sorrow; I feel no fear."

"Thou art very goody-goody," said Henrietta. "Now that this scamp has come, can we not play Puss-in-the-corner? That will be jolly good sport."

"Thou wilt stay where thou art," said Dinah. "Maureen, sit here."

She placed a little chair not far from Henny. Maureen sat down, but only for a minute, then she rose and said in a voice which was arresting and compelling so that even the wild girl who was tied in the chair noticed it, "I have *something* to tell you."

"What a bother," said Henrietta; "is it about Daisy? Is she well enough to come and see me? I heard yesterday that she was fine. Catch anything doing Daisy much harm; but however did you get all your hand and arm bandaged up? Was she scratching you? It was like her, little witch."

"No," replied Maureen. "It was you who did that, Henrietta, when you twisted the tablecloth round my legs. I got both scalded and burnt by the little brass urn and the spirit lamp."

"I told thee so," interrupted Dinah.

"But it is nothing," said Maureen, "nothing at all! I do not feel it indeed, Henrietta."

"There now, I said it was nothing," said Henrietta.

"But I want to tell you about Daisy."

"Yes, how is the imp?"

"Quite well. I have come to take you to her."

"I thought she couldn't do without *me* long. I

am the only one she ever loved, poor little bit, poor *bitteen*. If she's quite well, she might come to me, but it would be more fun going to her."

"Wilt thou go quietly and reverently," interrupted Dinah, "otherwise I will not undo thy cords."

"Why, what is the matter?" said Henrietta. "She, the brat, says she is quite well."

"Even so," replied Dinah; "but I must get thy answer."

"Oh, I'll be good," said Henrietta; "I'll have *lashins* and *lavins* to say to her. Poor little snippet; but what puzzles me is to know why I should go *reverently*, and you both look queer, very queer. Is my *Dysy* really well?"

"She is, most assuredly, quite well, Henrietta."

"I will be good, then, and go to her. I have lots and lots to say to her."

Dinah immediately slipped the cords, which fastened the rebellious girl into the chair. She looked with emphasis at Maureen, but Maureen would not meet her eyes.

As soon as ever Henrietta was free, Maureen took her hand. "Come," she said.

Dinah hesitated for a moment, and then resolved to follow them. They went out of Dinah's room, Henrietta talking rapidly and loudly, Maureen very still and calm.

At last they reached the door of the Infirmary. Maureen took the key out of her pocket.

"What's the matter with you, Maureen?" said

Henrietta, a little puzzled at last. "You don't look somehow *natural*. Oh, and there is that old Dinah following us. I shall have no fun unless I'm alone with my Daisy. Is it true that she is really well?"

"Yes, darling."

"Darling! You call *me* darling?"

"There are two ways of getting well," said Maureen. "Little Daisy has chosen the better way. Come at once. See how beautiful she is."

"Daisy beautiful! You must be joking."

Dinah took up her position outside the door. The two girls entered.

"Henny," said Maureen suddenly, "I'm afraid you will get something of a shock, for you will see your poor little sister as God meant her to be. The Evil Spirit has left her, and the very last thing she said was, '*I love you, Maureen; I love you!*' Now, look for yourself at her dear little face."

Quickly and deftly Maureen lifted the sheet and showed the dead girl covered with flowers.

Henrietta was indeed startled at last. She gave a great ringing, piercing cry, "Why, this is never *my* Daisy," she said.

"Yes, yours, and mine, and *God's!*"

"Is she—is she really dead?" said Henrietta. "I wouldn't know her. She's awfully pretty, little snip-pet; but why does she smile? Is she glad of her death? And her eyes are tight shut and her freckles are gone, and she looks very, very white, and her hair is as fuzzy-wuzzy as mine. Oh, it's all a joke you

are playing on me! Daisy! I say, Daisy! Wake up, wake up! See, snippet, we've a lot to do. Wake up, flower, wake up! Here, I don't often kiss, but I'll kiss you."

Henrietta bent and kissed the cold brow. She had never seen Death; she had never felt the cold chill of Death. She gave one exceeding bitter cry.

"Oh, Maureen, Maureen," she said, "save me! Save me!"

She clung to Maureen in frantic terror. At that moment Dinah entered the room.

"Dinah, look at her! She's *dead*!"

"Yea, dear heart," replied Dinah, "the good Lord took her from the evil to come. She passed into *His* arms, breathing out her great and exceeding love for *Maureen O'Brien*."

"Then I—I will love Maureen, too," said Henrietta. "Maureen, may I? May I?"

"I want you to," said Maureen. "I love you. I will be your sister. I will be your friend. Dinah, dear Dinah, may I take Henrietta into the Chamber of Peace?"

"Yes, thee mayst, wonderful child. Thee mayst do it for one whole hour, and when she comes back to me, I will be exceeding gentle with her."

But just at that moment the strangest of all strange things happened; for little white Daisy—whom all supposed to be dead, to have passed from this earth forever and ever—opened wide her eyes, those eyes rendered wide and big from illness and suffering,

and they saw a sight she was never, never to forget. No less a sight than her own Maureen—her own most blessed White Angel, supporting Henny in her arms; and—wonder of all wonders—Henny was kissing her and crying and saying, “As she loved you, poor snippet, why I do declare I just love you, too. Yes, Maureen. Yes, Maureen—I love—love you, too. But look, Maureen! Oh! look—oh! look—look! My Daisy is not dead at all!”

Then what a startling—what an amazing commotion took place—for Dinah would not be Dinah if she did not know what to do. She took the overwrought and excited Henrietta out of the room, and brought Nurse Annie on the scene; and then Dr. Halsted was summoned, and the nurses came back once more, and Daisy slept, but no longer the sleep of death, but the healing sleep of returning life, her thin, little hand clasped in that of the White, White Angel.

Yes, just when even Dr. Halsted thought she was dead, she recovered, slowly, but also surely; and afterwards, when her weak voice could utter the words, she whispered to Maureen, “I was in a deep, deep dream, and a heavy and yet most restful sleep; but through the dream and the sleep I heard poor Henny crying, and the White, White Angel comforting her, so I *had* to come back to *her*, and to my very own Maureen, my *own* Maureen.”

Thus were great relief and infinite joy experienced at Felicity; and not only did Daisy recover, but

Henny clung to Maureen, sleeping with her night after night in a little bed in the Chamber of Peace, and assuring her of the greatness of her own love. "Why, she *means* me to take care of you, poor snippet—and of course I will. You may be certain on that point."

Daisy got better, but Maureen really was ill for a time. Then Mr. O'Brien, who was terribly anxious about his darling, suggested that she should now leave the school and come with him and Dominic abroad. But Maureen said, "I'll go nowhere without Henny and Daisy, and I think they are best here for the present. If Daisy continues to improve, Dom can come and take us all out to you for the Christmas holidays. Dom will be able to leave Rugby for the purpose."

This suggestion was finally adopted, and strange as it may seem, Henrietta's and Daisy's characters were so much altered that even Dom did not know them. All their dislike to Maureen was now turned to passionate love. Daisy had grown very gentle, but Henny was still wild.

"Why, she means *me* to take care of you, you poor snippet," said Henrietta. "If *she* loves you, little dot, I am bound to do it. My word! I should think so, poor little lone thing that you are. But you'll have your Henny and Daisy in the future to comfort you."

Maureen in her heart of hearts found Henny's constant and violent embraces extremely trying, but

she bore them with angelic patience, and she and Henrietta slept together in the Chamber of Peace.

Dinah was their constant attendant, and the school resumed its accustomed work. Miss Pinchin was, however, requested not to return. Mrs. Faithful, who was a rich woman, secured to her a pension for the rest of her days, and in future, under the influence of Maureen, she treated even the naughtiest of the new girls in a different fashion.

Thus passed the first few months after Maureen's arrival. Henny had got a great shock and was much improved; but she was a mass of ignorance and required ordinary teaching. For Maureen's sake she did struggle to work; but the only part of her work she enjoyed was the preparing of her lessons, which she did under Maureen's care.

"I'll always be Fuzzy-wuzzy," she said to Maureen, "although you *are* the darlingest old pet. I'll always be Fuzzy-wuzzy. Even that angel of a Daisy could never turn me good like you. Besides I am not a bit clever, and I hate lessons."

"Well," said Maureen, "I've been thinking a great deal about you."

"Have you, you precious duck? And where have the thoughts come from?"

"Well, of course, you *can* be good, if you like. We all can if we like."

"I'm one of those who *don't* like," said Henrietta.

"Well, even supposing you don't like it, you're

having a grand, noble try, both for my sake and Daisy's," said Maureen.

"Do you really think I'm improved?" said Henrietta in amazement.

"Of course I do. I should not know you for the same girl. But now, look at me, Henny. Listen! I want to be downright desperately proud of you and Daisy. I want *you* to be the top girl of the school. Not in cleverness—for you are not clever, darling—but in the other really important things."

"What do you mean?" said Henrietta. "I thought school was a hot-house to force the brain."

"Some schools are, but not Felicity. I want you to be noted in this school, first for your gentleness."

"Hum!" said Henrietta, "a gentle Fuzzy-wuzzy!"

"Let me go on and say what is in my heart," continued Maureen. "Second, for your unselfishness."

"Turned into a goody-goody," muttered Henrietta.

"No, no, dear child. Forgive me; that is really a silly expression, but turned into one who *goes forward* and who takes others along with her. And now, think of the jolly time we have before us. We three girls are going to meet Uncle Pat in Rome, that glorious, delightful place, and when the Christmas holidays are over, and you have seen something of another side of life, I am going to ask Mrs. Faithful to put you into the sort of occupation which you can really do well, and which you have a gift for."

"And what on earth is that?" asked Henrietta.
"Oh, Maureen, you *are* entertaining."

"Well, I've been watching you a good bit."

"I should think so. Those eyes of yours would see through—well, through space itself. I often think you can see God."

"Of course I do. I see Him when I am most happy and when my dreams are most beautiful; but whenever He comes to me, awake or asleep, He says the same words, '*Help Henrietta and Daisy to find their lives.*'"

"I say, does He really?"

"Well, yes, that is what He does say; and *I* want you, Henrietta, to find your life. After Christmas is over, I want you to learn all those things which make a home happy. I will speak to Mrs. Faithful on the subject, and she will get you regular teachers, and if she cannot do it herself, you and Daisy can go to another school, where these things are specially taught."

"What things, what things?"

"I will tell you after we come back from Rome. Now, come out and let's have a chat with Margaret Devereux. I want her to be your real friend. It is very bad for you only to have your dear little sister and me."

Henrietta pouted and struggled, but in the end she yielded to the superior force.

Margaret proved herself to be a most fascinating girl, and as she had often been to Rome and knew

Italy very well indeed, she soon enthralled both girls with her accounts of the Forum and of the Coliseum by moonlight, and Nero's Golden House, and the great Church of St. Peter's, and the pictures in the Vatican, and the Pope and the cardinals. Margaret had a great gift for description, and even Henny did not miss a word.

Then Maureen suggested that they should not go to Rome a set of ignoramuses, but should write down each day what Margaret had told them. It is true that Maureen did most of the writing, but Henrietta and Daisy were genuinely excited.

"Hurrah for Fuzzy-wuzzy," exclaimed Daisy.
"Upon my word, she *is* coming on."

CHAPTER XXV.

FUZZY-WUZZY.

THERE was no doubt whatever that Maureen's influence, once extended to Fuzzy-wuzzy, as she was universally called at Felicity, exercised a beneficial effect, but it is also true that a character like Henrietta's could not attain to anything even approaching perfection for many long years.

The poor little girl would have to fight hard for her soul, and the sad thing about her was this, that the soul within her was of a meagre and feeble quality. She was neither clever nor really affectionate. Even poor Daisy had more real life and vitality in her than Henrietta, but neither girl was worth much. No one can account for these things, but doubtless much was to be laid at the door of that selfish mother, who in the most impressionable years of their lives put them in a cheap and common school, taking care indeed of the pence and letting the pounds take care of themselves. But even so, Henrietta and Daisy would never have been great women, although they might and would have been very different from the wild, the reckless, the hopelessly naughty girls who had gone to Templemore.

Daisy's illness was the best thing that could have happened to her, but Henrietta was strong and fierce still. She dreaded death with a great terror. She never forgot the feel of Daisy's cold brow just before she woke from her trance. In consequence she could not bear to be alone at night and slept with Maureen in the Chamber of Peace, much to that poor little girl's own discomfort.

But then Maureen lived for others, and mere physical discomfort was not even to be thought of or mentioned in her vocabulary.

By slow but sure degrees Maureen began to interest the other girls at Felicity in Henrietta and Daisy. There were very few of the exceedingly naughty girls at the school just then. Henrietta was far and away the naughtiest, but she enjoyed her companions and made them laugh with funny stories of the old house at Templemore.

She had by no means Daisy's remarkable powers of mimicry, but she could take off Pegeen and Burke to the life, and the girls simply shrieked and held their sides as they listened to her.

This kind of performance became exceedingly popular in the school, and Henrietta, feeling that "nothing venture, nothing have," proceeded to take off stepfather and mumsie-pumsie and even Maureen. But when she came to this, several girls in the school, Margaret Devereux at their head, marched away with their heads in the air.

"Why, sakes alive, whatever have I done now?" said Henny.

"I don't suppose any of us will let you make game of Maureen," said a dark-eyed girl of the name of Marjorie Clarke.

"Oh, oh," said Henrietta. "Why must *she* be held so sacred?"

"Because she is sacred," said Marjorie.

The other girls, one and all, agreed with her. Henrietta stood silent, rubbing up her fuzzy head.

"I don't believe she'd mind," was her remark after a pause. "She's a precious darling, she'd let me if it amused me. She'd do anything in the world for me. You see, it's like this, girls. My *Dysy* put her in my care."

"Oh, no, she didn't. I don't believe a word of that," said Marjorie rather angrily. "And you oughtn't to speak of your dear little sister as *Dysy*. Her pretty name is Daisy. I don't believe you have any respect in you either for the living or the dead."

"I haven't much," said Fuzzy. "I'm made that way, you see. Goodness gracious, how can I help the way I'm made!"

She looked wild with excitement.

"I tell you what, colleens," she suddenly exclaimed. "I just *dote* on Maureen. I see her in the distance talking to Margaret Devereux and Daisy. I'll go to her this minute and ask her if I may take her off. She would let me do anything

that amused me. She has such a *great* passion for me."

The girls stood silent in subdued amazement. Henrietta crossed the lawn. Maureen and Margaret were talking about Rome, Margaret taking good care not to breathe a word to Maureen about the way Fuzzy-wuzzy had gone on. Daisy was leaning on Maureen.

"Here I am, you old *ducks*," said Fuzzy, springing into their midst. "Now I want to ask this little precious one if she minds my taking her off. I haven't Daisy's gift in that direction, but I have it a trifle. You don't mind, do you, Maureen *asthore*?"

"If you really wish to take me off, Henrietta, and if it gives you pleasure, I hope I shall not be small enough to care."

"Oh, hoity-toity! We are putting on airs, aren't we?"

Here Henrietta boldly winked at Margaret. Margaret did not wink back in reply.

Daisy sprang to the front. "If you dare!" she said in her calm voice, that voice which she had won through pain and victory. "If you really wish to amuse yourself in that *disgraceful* way, I for one give you up. I did not intend to say anything to Maureen, for I would not hurt her feelings for the world; but I may as well tell you quite plainly and simply that I think, when you begin to take off our relations and friends and your old home, your audi-

ence will be *nil*, for not another girl in the school will listen to you."

"There, take that for your impudence!" said Henrietta, and she tried to slap Daisy, who immediately walked away. Henny burst into shrieks of crying, clasped her arms around Maureen, and said, "Oh, Maureen, *acushla machree*, what *have* I done? Oh, indeed, indeed, I didn't mean it, and you know well that I love you better than anyone in the world except little lost and come again Daisy. It's only the fun in me that must bubble to the surface."

"Ah, poor Henny," said Maureen in her gentle voice. "I did so hope that you would never behave like this again. You must come immediately to Daisy and beg her pardon."

"You won't catch *me* begging pardons."

"Henrietta, thou art wanted," said Dinah, who just then appeared on the scene.

She took the excited girl by the hand and led her into the house, then up to the Room of Useful Employment, where Henny had spent so many wretched hours; here a bright fire was burning, and the whole room looked as neat as the proverbial new pin. Dinah dragged the punishment chair into view.

"Sit thee down, maiden," she said.

"I will not! I will not! I have just been having a lark with the girls, and——"

"Thee didst try to slap thy sister on the cheek. I saw it all. It is ordained that thou sit in the Pun-

ishment Chair for the remainder of to-day, and to-night thou dost lie in a little bed by my side."

"What! What! May I not go to Maureen?"

"Thou art not worthy, unhappy maiden." As Dinah uttered the last words, Mrs. Faithful and Nurse Annie came in.

"Henrietta," said the headmistress, "I am inexpressibly shocked, and unless you publicly after Divine Prayer to-morrow morning ask forgiveness of Maureen and your sister, I shall keep you here with Dinah for the holidays, and will not allow you to go to Rome with Maureen and Daisy."

"Oh! oh!" howled Fuzzy.

"Come now, my dear, take your punishment meekly. Maureen has nothing to do with it. What I say I mean. Come, Nurse Annie, help Dinah to place Henrietta in this chair."

So, in spite of Henrietta's frantic struggles, and her boundless rage, into the chair she was put. She was quickly tied down, not in any way uncomfortably, but nevertheless in such a fashion that she could not move her head, her arms or her hands.

Mrs. Faithful and Nurse Annie then quietly left the room. Dinah turned on the bright light of a reading lamp, and resumed her endless sewing.

"Tell me something funny, dear Dinah," said Henrietta after a pause.

Silence, absolute and complete, on the part of Dinah.

"Oh, Dinah, this is too horrible; such a punish-

ment just for a bit of a lark. Art thou not going to speak to me?"

"No," replied Dinah; "not at all to-night."

"Oh, my word, then I'll be as naughty as ever."

Dinah folded her work gravely, then knelt down and began to pray. Henny screamed and roared and went on in her old rebellious fashion. Dinah continued to kneel in voiceless prayer. Taking it all round, it was rather a terrible scene. The infuriated girl, her angry and insulting words, and the calm woman who prayed.

At long last, that prayer, so devout and holy, had its effect. Henrietta began to sniffle, then to sob, then to cry copiously, then to call aloud for Maureen, Maureen! But still Dinah took no notice. She only got up very gently and wiped the tears from the poor swollen face, and presently rang for supper.

Henrietta made frantic efforts to catch her hand, but she was too securely fastened to attain her object. Then she sobbed afresh and Dinah knelt down once more and began to pray.

"I will stop crying if thou wilt not go on," said Henrietta at last in a frenzy. Instantly Dinah rose from her knees. She first of all wiped away Henrietta's fresh flood of tears, she then brought a little basin of warm water and bathed her swollen face, then she combed her hair, not ruffling it up according to the Fuzzy-wuzzy manner. It had not been cut for some months now and was growing long.

Henrietta hated beyond words to look a "show."

"Snip it and fuzz it, Dinah dear," she implored.

Dinah parted it quietly in the middle and put it behind her ears. She then again rang her bell.

Nurse Annie appeared. She was given certain directions in Dinah's clear voice. Ten minutes later supper was brought in for the naughty but now hungry girl. It was quite a plain supper, not the tempting supper which Dinah used to give her. There was a slice of cold meat and a piece of bread, no butter, a little salt, and a glass of cold water.

Dinah cut up the meat into strips and fed Henrietta.

"Oh, thou art worse than ever," said Henrietta.

Dinah made no reply.

Henrietta was so hungry that she dared not refuse the food. She ate every crumb, also, of the bread. She drained the glass of cold water.

Dinah then looked at the clock. She fell down close to Henrietta and suddenly resumed her prayers.

The whole thing was awful, heartbreaking. Henrietta said in a voice which was strangled with misery, "I'll be good, I'll be good. I want to go to bed. Let me go to bed at once, Dinah dear."

Dinah's soft dove eyes were fixed on her face. She asked with her eyes the question she would not put into words. Her beautiful eyes said, "Wilt thee humiliate thyself to-morrow morning?"

Henrietta could not mistake the language. She gave a vigorous nod and let her hair tumble about her head. Immediately Dinah unfastened the slip-

knots which bound the girl and conveyed her to her own bedroom.

It was a little room not at all like the Chamber of Peace. It was very plain, even severe. Dinah had put away her work and extinguished the reading-lamp before she left the Room of Useful Employment.

She undressed Henrietta and put her into bed. She then lay down beside her, but only partly undressed herself. That is, she merely exchanged her quiet Quaker dress and cap and apron for a dressing-gown also made of the Quaker grey. She then stretched herself beside Henrietta.

Henrietta suddenly clutched one of her hands and kissed it.

"Oh, Dinah, Dinah dear!"

No words of any sort came from Dinah.

Henrietta was so weary that she dropped asleep. She slept all night long without moving.

Early in the morning Dinah got up. Henrietta was still sleeping. Dinah got out one of the hideous punishment dresses—the grey stuff with the ugly sort of white overall.

"I won't—I won't wear that," cried Henny.

Dinah made no comment, but just at this moment Nurse Annie appeared with a sitz-bath. Between Nurse Annie and Dinah, Henrietta was powerless. She was fed with bread-and-milk, quite nourishing and good. Then the punishment dress was put on. Afterwards, between Nurse Annie and Dinah, she

went slowly downstairs to the great hall. Maureen was present and Daisy. Prayers were about to begin.

All the love of all the world seemed to shine out of Maureen's eyes. Every girl in the school stared at the culprit in the punishment dress, but Maureen did not even see the dress. She was looking beyond it into the heart of the girl.

Prayers began as usual and came to an end. Then there was a pause, significant, rather appalling.

Suddenly Maureen rose and, taking Henrietta's little cold hand, said, "Come, darling!"

"To the world's end with you, *asthore*," was Henrietta's reply.

Maureen took her straight up to Daisy.

"Daisy," said Maureen, "she has come to tell you that she is very, very sorry."

"I am indeed, most truly," said Henrietta, and there was absolute conviction in her voice.

"Then of course I forgive you, Fuzzy darling—darling! It was your trying to take off our dearest Maureen that hurt my very soul."

Here she touched Maureen with infinite love and tenderness on the shoulder.

"I quite forgive our Henny," she said.

"Then, my dear Henrietta," said Mrs. Faithful, "there is an end of the matter. You have expressed sorrow and are quite forgiven. Maureen, darling, take her upstairs and remove her punishment frock.

We sincerely trust there will not be a repetition of this terrible scene."

During the rest of that day Henrietta was quiet, clinging to Maureen and Daisy and talking very little, but the day after she recovered her usual spirits, for hers was not a nature ever to fret deeply or long.

She ceased, however, to cultivate her gift of mimicry, which was in itself too slight to be of any value.

The Christmas holidays were fast approaching, and Maureen, Henrietta, Daisy and Dominic were to meet the beloved Rector in Rome. Maureen's heart beat high with delight. Henrietta and Daisy were also excited, but not to the same degree.

At last the day when they were to start arrived. They were to be exactly four weeks away. Henrietta enjoyed the travelling very much. They got to Rome at midnight of the second day.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LESSON NOT YET LEARNED.

Now many of the girls who read this story will doubtless imagine that Henrietta Mostyn has learned her lesson and will in future be at least an ordinarily good girl, not breaking out into any violent crises of bad temper and naughtiness. But the girls who do think so do not quite realise Henrietta's nature.

For the first couple of days she was delighted with the life at the charming hotel where Mr. O'Brien had taken rooms for his party. The foreign food was also agreeable to her palate. She could talk as much as she pleased, and she certainly did chatter to her heart's content, but the beauty and the glory and the greatness of Rome were not for one like Henrietta.

The great Church of St. Peter's puzzled her, but aroused no respect. The pictures at the Vatican which so enraptured Maureen and Dominic wearied her to distraction. The different churches they visited were all beautiful to Maureen, Dominic, and Mr. O'Brien, but go where they would, see what they might, the only thing that really pleased Henrietta

was her food, her admirable food, and the different dresses that the ladies wore who came in and out of the hotel.

As to everything else, it became a weariness of the flesh to the poor child. She did not like the innumerable shops with their lovely photographs and pieces of rare *vertu* exposed to view, but she gloated over the shops which displayed chocolates, cakes, and other dainty sweetmeats. She liked, too, to see the shops full of colour. She wanted brightness. She had a perfect passion for sweets and very gay beads and for brightness. In short, Henrietta was nothing less than a vigorous little cuckoo hatched in the wrong nest.

She was still, it is true, anxious to please Maureen, but otherwise she was sick of Rome.

One morning the whole party went early to the celebrated Fountain of Trevi, and, as was the custom, Dominic, the Rector, Maureen, and Daisy all drank of the sparkling, delicious water. Maureen filled a glass to the brim and brought it to Henrietta.

"Take it away," said Henny; "I hate cold water."

"Oh," replied Maureen, "but you must try and drink this. There is an old legend about this. You drink, if it is only a little, and it will insure your return again to this darling, splendid Rome."

"That settles the question," replied Henrietta. "If there is a place on this earth I loathe, it is Rome. It is a degree worse, I do declare, than the Punish-

ment Chair, and Dinah praying without uttering a word aloud, and that is saying a good bit."

"Well, Henny, you'll learn to love the wonders of Rome some day. Look, do look, there are some cardinals. Don't they look too wonderful in their crimson robes?"

"I won't look. I don't see anything pretty or beautiful about those affected beings. I say, Maureen, I've got a splitting pain in my *nut*. Please, Maureen's uncle, for you don't allow me to call you step-daddy, may I go back at once to the Hotel? I promise indeed to be good and, as you are all going to that horrid Vatican, may I not lie down? Please, I cannot stand any more pictures."

"I'm sorry you have a headache," said Maureen. "Perhaps, Uncle Pat, she might go back and lie down. We must try and find something quite light and entertaining for her to-night."

"Oh yes, do, do," said Henny, clapping her hands.

"Henrietta, can I take you at your word; will you be good?" said the Rector. "Dominic and Maureen and Daisy and I are going to meet one of the great professors, who will show us and explain to us the recent excavations in the Forum."

"I honestly promise to be good—I do, indeed," said Henny.

"And you won't leave the Hotel; *you promise?*"

"Of course, I do. I'll be only too thankful to lie down and keep quiet until it is time to eat. Although I have a headache, I am hungry. I suppose

I may eat even though you are out enjoying what would kill me."

"Yes, poor little girl, you may certainly eat. We'll take her back to the Hotel, Maureen, and put her under the care of Victorine, who will let her know when *déjeuner* is served."

So Henrietta had her way.

Victorine was a dark-eyed Italian girl, who could speak broken English, and promised volubly to see after the signorina, but Mr. O'Brien did not feel thoroughly comfortable as he went off with Maureen and Daisy and Dominic, at leaving this wild creature practically alone.

But Maureen, for once in her life, was selfish. She absolutely forgot Henrietta in the marvels which the great professor poured into her cultured little mind. She listened with awe and wonder.

She was no longer in the country of modern civilization; she had ceased to be a child of the present day. She was back in the old, old times. She was even with Nero in his unspeakable cruelty—but also in the refinement of this extraordinary being's perfect taste.

She was with the Vestal Virgins. She was under the Arch of Titus. She stood on the banks of the Tiber, that mighty river of ancient times. Her heart thrilled and stood still. Was *this* narrow turbid stream the mighty fast-flowing river that was known in history, where the great Horatius kept the bridge?

It was some small comfort to the eager little lis-

tener when the old professor explained to her how centuries had worked changes and that the river was really a mighty mass of swift-flowing water in the brave days of old.

The learned professor was really charmed with his little companion, and insisted on the entire party coming to lunch with him in his *appartement* in one of the old palaces.

Finally he took them to see under his own special guidance the greatest picture in the world—Raphael's Transfiguration, that mighty masterpiece, so well known, and never to be forgotten. He explained the full meaning of the picture, Christ in Glory, the awed and terrified disciples, the epileptic boy. He described how, when Raphael died, the picture was scarcely finished, but it was hung over his death-bed as he lay in state, and was carried in his funeral procession.

Finally he recited those great lines of Rogers:

“And when all beheld
Him where he lay, how changed from yesterday—
Him in that hour cut off, and at his head
His last great work;—when entering in, they look'd,
Now on the dead, then on *that* masterpiece—
Now on his face, lifeless and colourless,
Then on those forms divine that lived and breathed,
And would live on for ages—all were moved,
And sighs burst forth and loudest lamentations.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LEARNING OF LIFE'S LESSON.

HENRIETTA, when she first returned to the Hotel, had no idea of being disobedient. On the contrary, she thought she would partake of an enormous lunch and then get hold of some novel and enjoy herself. She could manage to forget Rome and its abominations for the time being, but alas for Henrietta, she was a wonderfully restless being. She ate ravenously after Victorine told her that *déjeuner* was waiting, then she went up to her room, and absolutely and completely forgetting her solemn promise to step-daddy and Maureen, she prepared to go out on her own account.

The Coliseum fascinated her, for she had a great natural love for horrors. She thought if she could only get there by herself she could imagine the whole scene when the lions sprang out upon the Christians and tore them to pieces. She didn't so much mind about the gladiators, but she thought it would be lovely to see a Christian like Dinah torn to bits. She could entertain herself very well for an hour or two at the Coliseum. She accordingly put on a bright-red frock, which *almost* toned with her hair, and

which she had purchased secretly a day or two ago. Although cold in England, it was balmy and delightful in Rome. The air was like nectar and was very rousing to the spirit. She ruffled up her hair more than ever and perched upon its mass of curls a small black velvet cap with a long red feather. Her eyes were bright with excitement.

She loved people to stare at her. She always stared back with bold defiance. If they were nice people she smiled to them. If they were the reverse she frowned, but in the company of step-daddy and Dominic and Maureen and Daisy she did not dare to give way to these queer freaks of her nature.

Finally, she put her purse into her pocket. She had plenty of money, mostly in Italian lire, which she greatly disliked because it looked dirty. Nevertheless the dirty lire could buy things and she meant to have a feast all by herself in the Coliseum. She went to a shop where sweetmeats, cakes, and chocolates of all sorts abounded, but first she twisted round her neck a long and very valuable gold chain, which had belonged to her mother. The late Mrs. O'Brien had many jewels, which were kept reverently by the Rector for her daughters when they came of age. He had allowed each girl, however, to take a memento of their mother away with them when they went to school.

Daisy had a little watch studded round with diamonds, and Henrietta had a long gold chain. She hung the gold chain round her neck, and soon started

off for the Coliseum in the highest spirits. She had a great bag of sweetmeats, and she meant to imagine herself *Nero*, or *perhaps* one of the lions, who was devouring Dominic and stepfather, while Maureen stood gravely by crying and expostulating. She imagined her finger as Nero's, pointing down for the certain destruction of her relatives. She was so ignorant that she did not know that this was the special office of the *Vestal Virgins*.

Oh, it would be fun! The day was sunny and bright, and it was still fairly early. Henrietta reached the Coliseum. A guide came up and spoke to her. He spoke broken English. She asked him two important questions, one with regard to Nero's throne, the other the exact place where the lions came out.

He explained them to her volubly.

Henrietta said, "You can go now, I don't want anything more."

"Will you not give me a lire, kind *signorina*?"

"I? Give you all that?" cried Henrietta. "Not I! Get you gone!"

The man frowned. He had a very dark Italian face. He left the Coliseum slowly. There were no visitors to-day, they would come perhaps to-night, for the moon would shine, but meanwhile, with the exception of this one intolerable *signorina*, he had seen no one. He made a scanty living by showing people round the Coliseum, and they always paid him if not a lire, at least a smaller coin. He had

his wife and brown-faced children living in a hut on the hills. Giuseppa, his eldest son, would clamour for bread. Felisé, his wife, would ask him what he meant by coming back penniless. All the children would cry. He could not bear to hear them cry. He had the hot blood of the Italians in his veins. He took a dagger from his breast and looked at it longingly. The red signorina was doubtless rich. She abounded in jewels. He had caught a glimpse of her long thick gold chain. She wasn't a nice signorina, not at all. Still, *if* he murdered her, he might lose his employment. He had no compunction about taking her life, but the money obtained for the gold chain would be exhausted long before he got another job.

On the whole, he had better let her be.

Meanwhile, Henrietta, in the height of enjoyment, seated herself in the part which was supposed to be Nero's throne, and spread out her sweetmeats before her. She began to "gobble, gobble," as she expressed it. How she wished Daisy was with her! It was really tiresome of Daisy to go with the others. What fun they two would have in the Coliseum now. How they would mimic that horrid Italian.

After a time, having eaten to repletion, she left Nero's throne and went boldly down the steps which led to the underground cavern where the hungry lions were kept in the brave days of old.

She did not much like this place. It was gloomy. She quickly left it and came back into the sunshine.

To her horror and disgust, she saw a particularly wild and fierce-looking man, seated on Nero's throne and devouring with great appetite and relish the remains of her chocolates and sweetmeats.

"Hi! Stop that! Get out of that!" cried Henrietta. "Those are mine, you horrid thief!"

The man did not know a single word of English, but he smiled derisively and continued his meal. Henrietta flew at him in a transport of rage and began to box him about the ears and to try and get back what was left of her lost possessions.

The man turned upon her with a wicked flash, out of black eyes, the darkness of which she had never seen before. In an instant he had gagged his victim, tying a rough cloth round her mouth and the lower part of her face. She could not speak; she could scarcely breathe. He then proceeded deliberately to rob her. He took the chain and her purse, which contained a number of lire and some gold pieces.

He then took out a dagger and showed it to her. The dagger was very bright and sharp. He pointed it at her breast.

The sun had gone in by now, and, quick as thought, he tucked his arm round the terrified girl and conducted her through back ways and slums until they got out under the Arch of Titus, and thus on to the Via Appia. They walked quickly, the girl breathing hard and really terrified at last.

Presently they came to a great building, which

stood alone amidst others very similar to it, in this gloomy spot. It was the most celebrated tomb of a great Roman lady, which had been erected to her honour on the Via Appia. The front of the tomb faced the straight and level road, but the back was neglected, unsought and uncared for. The bones of the great lady doubtless lay within, but *she* had no power now to protect the shivering girl. This Roman matron of high repute could do nothing for the scornful little Henrietta in her time of need. The girl tried feebly to pray. She was doubtless in the hands of a brigand. He would kill her at any moment. He uttered exclamations of rapture as they approached the mighty tomb, and swept the girl round to the back.

No one saw them as they disappeared, although carriages and even motor-cars were going by in numbers, returning quickly to Rome before the dangerous hour of the sunset.

The Italian bandit then calmly proceeded to take from one of his numerous pockets a great coil of coarse rope. With this he bound Henrietta hand and foot and laid her on the grass. As he did so, the guide to whom she had refused a lire came up.

"Ha, Giuseppa," said the guide.

Henrietta struggled to speak.

The guide laughed heartily and went away with the bandit into one of the fastnesses of the surrounding hills.

The girl, lying on the weeds and grass, just be-

neath the tomb of this great Roman lady, did not know what was going to happen to her. She was certain that when it was quite dark that awful man would return.

Such, indeed, was his intention. He meant to hide the cruel foreigner until a mighty ransom was secured for her delivery, but he could not take her across the Campagna in her remarkable dress until the night had really come.

Poor Henrietta rolled about in anguish. These cords were cutting into her flesh. The Punishment Chair was the home of all luxury compared to this. She believed unless deliverance came—and why should deliverance come?—she would be stabbed with that awful dagger.

Meanwhile Maureen continued to be selfish. Her uncle wondered at her. Never before had he seen his little girl so determined to have her own way.

"I want, Uncle Pat," she said, "to see the great tomb of Cecilia Metella. Don't you know those lines in *Childe Harold*?"

"No, my child, but I don't like being out on the Campagna so late."

"I will repeat the lines," said Maureen. "We shall soon get there."

"But—but—Henrietta!" muttered the Rector.

"We will go back to her immediately after seeing this wonderful tomb," said Maureen.

Then in her rich voice she repeated the well-known words:

"There is a stern round tower of other days,
Firm as a fortress, with its fence of stone,
Such as an army's baffled strength delays,
Standing with half its battlements alone,
And with two thousand years of ivy grown,
The garland of eternity, where wave
The green leaves over all by time o'erthrown;—
What was this tower of strength? within its cave
What treasure lay so lock'd, so hid?—a woman's grave.

"But who was she, the lady of the dead,
Tomb'd in a palace? Was she chaste and fair?
What race of chiefs and heroes did she bear?
What daughter of her beauties was the heir?
How lived—how loved—how died she?

"Perchance she died in youth: it may be, bowed
With woes far heavier than the ponderous tomb
That weighed upon her gentle dust, a cloud
Might gather o'er her beauty, and a gloom
In her dark eye, prophetic of the doom
Heaven gives its favourites—early death.
Perchance she died in age—surviving all,
Charms, kindred, children—with the silver grey
On her long tresses, which might yet recall,
It may be, still a something of the day
When they were braided, and her proud array
And lovely form were envied, praised and eyed
By Rome—but whither would Conjecture stray?
Thus much alone we know—Metella died,
The wealthiest Roman's wife; Behold his love or pride!

"There, Uncle Pat, isn't that magnificent?" said the girl. "And oh, here we are!"

Henrietta, lying hidden at the back of the round tower, heard the well-known voices. She heard

Daisy's laugh. Hope revived in her heart. She managed with a superhuman effort to give a sort of groan.

Instantly, without a moment's hesitation, Maureen had flown to the back of the tomb and was bending over her. "Oh, Uncle Pat, Uncle Pat, give me your knife quickly, quickly! I'm here, it's all right, darling! Oh yes, I know you disobeyed, but we'll set you free and bring you home. Don't talk, but keep up your courage. Your own Maureen, whom you love, is with you."

* * * * *

And this, perhaps, may be a fitting end to the story, for Henrietta's hard little speck of a heart *was* softened at last. Her terror and anguish, her real and appalling danger had done their work.

* * * * *

Some years have passed now since Maureen rescued Henrietta from the back of the tomb of that great Roman lady, Cecilia Metella, and Maureen has long left Felicity to take up other work in other places, to spread her bright influence of love around her more and more, but Henrietta and Daisy are still inmates of Felicity. Strange and extraordinary as it seems, the desire of Maureen's heart has been realised and the once naughty and hopeless Henrietta has now become the greatest comfort of Mrs. Faithful. She is not only the head girl of the school, but she is the one who is always sent for in times of trouble and difficulty. Her fun and wit are as bright as ever, her fiery hair gives her a striking appear-

ance, and she warns the naughty ones when they arrive of their hopeless position, and where poor Miss Pinchin failed, she succeeds. On her lips are the words of kindness, in her heart is as much love as she is capable of. Every one likes her, every one appeals to her.

Dinah says, "I could not do without thee."

Mrs. Faithful has made a request that she may continue at Felicity as long as she likes, as no one ever before so helped her in the school.

Maureen and her Uncle have left Templemore and have gone to live in England. This was a trial to Maureen, for she loved her country people beyond words, but the Rector had grown feeble, sadly so of late, and the Colonel gave up his beautiful place of Rathclaren, or rather he sold it, and he and the Rector live together, while Maureen keeps house for them both.

"They are *my dear old men*," she says in her sweet voice, and surely no voice could ever be sweeter than hers.

It is easy for Dominic and Denis and Kitty to come to them during the holidays, much easier than to cross over to the "ould, ould country."

Maureen is as fond of Dominie as ever.

"I am happy as the day is long," she said to him one day, "but there is just one thing I miss, Dom, old boy."

"And what may that be, *acushla machree*?"

"Why, then, you wouldn't guess," said Maureen

with a flash of her soft brown eyes. "But it is just the *periwinkles*, avick. I think if I could lie down on them once again and look up through the trees at the blue, blue sky, I'd be—*well*, I'd be in Heaven."

"It strikes me you are always in Heaven, Maureen Aroon," said the lad.

He was going to Balliol then, having obtained a fine scholarship.

Maureen said gently, "Heaven is always in my heart, always. I left Hate behind at the bottom of the Peak of Desolation."

"Ah, Maureen, there never was your like," said Dominic. "And what news of Fuzzy-wuzzy and Daisy?" he continued.

"Oh, but just splendid," said Maureen. "Amongst all my happy thoughts, this is my happiest. Do you know that Henny is the head girl of the school! And though she is just as funny as ever, Mrs. Faithful would not give her up for the wide world. She has begged Uncle Pat to let her stay at Felicity for the present."

"And will he?" asked Dominic, a slight note of anxiety in his tone.

"Why, of course, Fuzzy wishes it herself."

"Then that's all right," said Dom.

"Dom, she must come back sometimes, and when she does, and you are at home, you must show her that you love her."

"But I don't, you see," said the boy.

"There you are; you are not my *own* boy, Dom,

when you talk like that. Poor little Fuzzy-wuzzy! It isn't in her nature to give *much* love, so it is our bounden duty to lavish it on her, to surround her with it. She must feel it mentally and in her heart."

"She loves *you*, Maureen," said Dominic, in his solemn way.

"Yes," replied Maureen, very gently. "I went to Felicity last week to see them both, and she told me, poor darling, that she was perfectly happy, and all the people were so nice to her, and she could manage the naughty girls, oh, quite wonderfully. She told me also that she loved as much as ever she *could* Mrs. Faithful and Dinah, but, she added, and, oh, Dom, I declare she looked quite *beautiful*, she said, 'I have to *force* myself to love them, but I do manage a little bit; whereas, *you*, Maureen, *you* and Daisy, without any effort, have *all the love of my heart*.'"

And Daisy, what became of her in the future? What did she see in that deep, trance-like slumber, which even the clever doctors and the professional nurses took for death? Something surely which she was never to forget, which, in fact, she never did forget. For, as a matter of fact, the love of Maureen, her passionate devotion to the White Angel, had entered down deep into her heart and stayed there forever and ever.

The Daisy of the present is a quiet girl. She has perhaps a little of the mantle of Maureen flung over her. She is remarked in the school for her great

gentleness; the sly look so apparent once in her face has utterly departed. She is sweet and grave and noted for her unselfishness.

Henrietta must always retain her fire, but Daisy, by a look or word, can compel her. Daisy is happy of the happy. She knows the very solemn things of life, for has she not in very truth stood at the entrance to the gate of death with the White Angel?

THE END.

DATE TAKEN

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